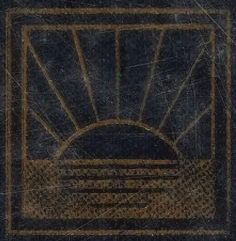
THE DEATH OF A MILLIONAIRE

G.D.H. AND MARGARET COLE



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THE DEATH OF A MILLIONAIRE

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THE DEATH OF A MILLIONAIRE

BY

G. D. H. COLE

AND

MARGARET COLE

New York

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PART I

THE DEATH OF A MILLIONAIRE

CHAPTER I

IN WHICH A VERY GREAT MAN IS KEPT WAITING, AND A MOST RESPECTABLE ESTABLISHMENT SEVERELY COMPROMISED

Perhaps you know Sugden's Hotel in St. James's Square. Or perhaps you have never heard of it. Most people never have: it all depends on the world you move in. The casual passer-by never becomes aware of it. There is no illuminated sign outside—not even a name on the door. It does not look like a hotel, inside or out. It has all the air of a handsome, well-appointed private residence, the town house of some patrician of unexceptionable means and manners. It is not large, but it is the best hotel in London. Any one who is any one will tell you so. It is not meant for the likes of us.

Sugden's has two great virtues greatly prized by its patrons. It is comfortable, and it is quiet. It has both these virtues in the highest degree, and carries them with an entire lack of ostentation. Most hotels boast and swagger: Sugden's has no need to blow its own trumpet. It is there: that is all. You can take it or leave it. It is not like a palace: it is not like a gargantuan lavatory: it is not a hotel in that sense of the term. It is just a quiet, gentlemanly house, the resort of quiet, gentlemanly people who know the best

and are in the habit of getting it every day of their lives.

Sugden's is sure of its social standing—sure of itself and of its tradition. You cannot simply drive up to its door and hire a room. You have to be introduced —impeccably. Hugh Restington had this advantage: his suite had been reserved for him by no less a person than the Earl of Ealing, K.G.

Sugden's is not in the habit of being put about. It holds itself above the battle of life. Yet in Sugden's Hotel, on this sharp November morning, the stage is set for the first act of the drama here presented to the reader. And at this very moment, as the story opens, there is an almost perceptible flutter of hearts in Sugden's august vestibule. The hall porter, the boy in buttons, and the lady in the little office to the left of the entrance are all just a little flustered by what you, stout-hearted, democratic reader, doubtless regard as a most unimportant event. For all that has happened is that the Earl of Ealing has left his chauffeur to park his great purring motor-car in the square, and, passing up the broad steps, has asked for Mr. Restington, adding that he believes he is expected.

"Nothing in that," you say. But, though you may never have heard of Sugden's, it can hardly be that you have never heard of Lord Ealing. Have you never heard of the Chevalier Bayard, of the Admirable Crichton, of Napoleon, of Lord Northcliffe, of Mr. Winston Churchill, of Lord Leverhulme, and of Sir Eric Geddes? The Earl of Ealing combines the virtues of them all. He is a great patrician of unblemished descent; for that little episode of his great-great-grandfather and the flower-girl counts by now as an honour—the King Cophetua touch. He is the richest

man in England, and president, for the third successive year, of the Federation of British Enterprises. He has been a member of several Cabinets—the urbanest of Home Secretaries, the most popularly militant of War Ministers, as well as the most finished orator in Parliament. He owns several newspapers, and knows how to wield the power of the Press. And he is the chairman of the fairest jewel in the crown of British commercial enterprise—the Anglo-Asiatic Commercial Corporation. Moreover, this morning's papers contain an intimation, from "a well-informed correspondent," that His Majesty's Government, though of the opposite party, has advised the conferring of a marquisate on this mighty one as the reward of his memorable services in the recent commercial negotiations with France. Hearts needs must beat faster at such a paladin's approach.

It is but nine o'clock in the morning—early for the great to be abroad. But the hall porter knows, and the boy in buttons knows, and the lady in the little office knows, that Lord Ealing has promised to take breakfast this morning with Mr. Restington, the American gentleman who occupies suite number five. With pardonable pride, Mr. Restington, in ordering breakfast the night before, mentioned the name of his distinguished guest, and the news spread rapidly round the hotel. Although Lord Ealing is expected, the mere fact of his arrival is enough to cause something of a flutter in the hearts of the hall porter, the boy in buttons, and the lady in the little office, who has but now been refreshing, out of *Debrett*, her memory of Lord Ealing's virtues. For Sugden's gives employment only to such as feel a proper veneration for the great.

But there is more in it than mere proper feeling.

Hugh Restington has ordered breakfast for 9.30, and has given positive orders that he must not be called until ten past nine o'clock. It is now barely nine; yet here is Lord Ealing arrived already. Calamity of calamities! He has arrived half an hour too early: the Marquess of Ealing (for surely one may anticipate in one's thoughts the coming honour), the Marquess will be kept waiting. He may be hungry: it is desolating to think of a hungry marquess. He may be annoyed: great men's tempers are seldom of the best. He may visit on Sugden's his resentment at the affront. Dreadful things may happen.

The hall porter assumes his most deferential manner, reserved as a rule for the goutier princes of the royal blood. "Will your lordship be so good as to step this way a moment?" He ushers the great man into the outer lounge next door to the little office. "Mr. Restington, m'lord, shall be hinformed himmediately." The hall porter always throws in a few additional aitches at moments such as this. It seems somehow more respectful. At normal times his aitches are normal.

The porter beckons majestically to the boy in buttons.

"Inform the attendant of suite number five that the Right Hon. the Earl of Ealing awaits Mr. Restington below."

The boy hurries off. Silence, as of prayer, descends on the vestibule. A full ten minutes pass. Lord Ealing stands before the fire, frowning a little. He does not like to be kept waiting. Then at last, after the silence has grown tense, and Lord Ealing's frown has had time to deepen into a scowl, down the august steps comes the scurrying boy in buttons, too agitated

to use the lift, and with wide, terror-struck eyes—a panic figure against the placid background of Sugden's decorative scheme.

"Mister, I say, Mister," he pants . . . "Thomas says . . . it's murder. Help!"

Never before has the hall porter, in his sacred hall, and under the very eyes of an honoured visitor, been addressed as "mister" by a minion. The outrage, however, passes unnoticed, for the boy's manner is enough to show that something is seriously wrong. "What's that?" says the hall porter, clutching at a chair for support, and overturning it in his consternation, "Murder? Here? Who would dare?—I'm coming," and he runs with ungainly steps to the lift, the boy following close on his heels, drawn with frightful fascination back to the scene of disaster.

The lady in the little office protrudes a frightened head, but dares not leave her post. Lord Ealing, in the lounge, both sees and hears. Emerging into the hall, he hesitates for a moment what to do. The lift shoots up out of sight. He stares for a few seconds after it, then turns and runs rapidly up the stairs. The lady, with her head still sticking out over the office counter, is left, making faint, frightened noises, in sole possession of the field. She stares fixedly at the empty hall with horror in her eyes.

. . . . . .

Suite number five was on the first floor. When Lord Ealing reached the head of the stairs, he saw the hall porter, with the boy still beside him, hurrying towards a silent, beckoning figure at the other end of the main corridor. This was Thomas, the attendant belonging to the suite. "What's up?" asked the porter, in a

hoarse whisper; for the hotel guests must on no account be disturbed. "What's all this fuss about?" he added fiercely, as if it were all Thomas's fault that the serenity of Sugden's had been so rudely disturbed.

"It's in his room," Thomas whispered. "He's not there. I don't like the look of it."

"Don't like what?" said the porter, brushing past. "Here, I'll see for myself." The others followed him in. Lord Ealing silently brought up the rear. None seemed to notice him. It was a measure of the shock these well-drilled servants had sustained.

The sitting-room which they entered was in perfect order. A cheerful fire was burning, and a round table set ready for breakfast for two persons. Nothing amiss so far. "It's in there," said Thomas, pointing to an open door beyond. The little procession moved across the room, and looked into Hugh Restington's bedroom.

This room was in utter confusion. The bedclothes had been torn from the bed, and lay—a crumpled heap —on the floor. A small table which had stood beside the bed had been overturned, and lay on its side, surrounded by the objects scattered in its fall—an electric reading lamp with a broken bulb, the glass trodden into powder, several books, some papers, and a gold watch with its face shattered. Several chairs had been thrown down, and the back of one wrenched off in its fall. On the floor were scattered numerous fragments of rock, piles of clothes and papers, and other miscellaneous objects—apparently the contents of two large trunks which stood open—obviously rifled—on the farther side of the room. In contrast to the confusion, a suit of clothes and undergarments, all neatly folded, lay on a chair which stood, in the midst of the

debris, miraculously spared in the violent struggle which had obviously taken place in the room.

"My God," said the hall porter, whose ruddy face had gone greenish-white, "it looks like murder."

The three men stood still, contemplating the wreckage, uncertain for a moment what to do. Not so the boy, recovered by now from his fright, and conscious above all of a delicious excitement at his prominent part in these dire events. He ran straight to the heap of bedclothes, and began pulling at them, as if he expected to find a corpse beneath.

His action aroused his elders. Lord Ealing swiftly assumed command. "Here, come out of that at once," he said. The boy stopped pulling and turned round.

"Please, sir, there's a great big bloodstain on that there sheet," he said, as all his memories of Sexton Blake came crowding into his mind.

"You just come here and let it alone. Don't you hear what his lordship says?" growled the porter, recovering his voice and his authority.

"Begging your lordship's pardon," said Thomas, "there's what looks like a big bloodstain over there on the wall." He and the hall porter had become servants again. The boy's action had recalled them to a sense of their duty.

"Come into the other room, all of you," said Lord Ealing. "There has been foul play here. Till the police come, nothing must be touched. You understand that? They must be sent for at once." He spoke brusquely, the tone of command covering his evident discomposure. "You, what's your name, go and telephone at once for the police. Ring up Scotland Yard. Ask the operator for 'official,' and mention my

name. Get on to some one in authority and tell them to send their best man round."

The porter hurried off, and Lord Ealing told Thomas to go and bring the manager. The boy he bade sternly to sit down in the window-seat and to sit still. "Don't fidget," he said, as the boy began kicking the seat beneath him.

For a moment the boy sat still, then he spoke. "M'lord . . . m'lord."

"Well, what do you want?" Lord Ealing, who had been staring into the fire, turned towards him.

"Have you looked in the other bedroom, m'lord?" He pointed towards another door, on the opposite side of the sitting-room.

Lord Ealing strode to the door and tried it. It was locked. He went on shaking it for a moment. "Was any one sleeping in here last night?" he asked.

"Yes, m'lord, the foreign gent what came with the gent what's been murdered. He slept there. But he's gone. . . . Lord, I suppose it was him done it," added the boy, gloating.

"Gone? Who's gone? When?" said Lord Ealing.

"The foreign gent, m'lord. 'E went off first thing this morning, 'e did. I ordered a taxi for 'im last night . . . myself."

"What time did he go?"

"'Bout seven o'clock. They was gettin' of his luggage down just as I came on duty."

"Who was getting his luggage?"

"Why, Thomas and Mr. Sacheverell—that's 'im that was here just now."

"The hall porter?"

"Yes, 'im and Thomas. It was a 'eavy one, too, that trunk. I saw 'em carryin' of it."

"Who was the man who went away? Do you know?"

"Funny-looking, foreign bloke, spoke funny, and all that. I 'eard Mr. Sacheverell sayin' 'e was a Rooshian."

"He was with Mr. . . . Restington, was he?"

"I s'pose he was. They was sharin' this 'ere suite. . . . Do you think 'e done it, m'lord?"

"Hm, we shall see," said Lord Ealing. "A damned awkward business," he added, to himself.

At this moment the manager entered, followed by Thomas and the hall porter. "I have telephoned, my lord," said the porter. "The Inspector says he will be round in a few minutes."

Mr. Moses Mounteagle, manager of Sugden's Hotel—Sugden himself was dead and gone long ago—was a picture of distress. A murder—in Sugden's of all places—was bad enough, a sign of lamentable bad taste on the part of the murderer. But even that calamity seemed to be overshadowed in the manager's mind by the awful fact that the crime had been so committed as to put the great Earl of Ealing to personal inconvenience.

"I am distressed, my lord, distressed beyond measure. Believe me, my lord, I had no idea. Your lordship's breakfast. . . . Your lordship will perhaps condescend to breakfast in another room. I will give orders at once. I entreat your lordship to believe . . ."

"Don't be a fool, Mounteagle," said his lordship. "Never mind my breakfast."

"I assure you, my lord, it shall not occur again, if your lordship will allow me . . ."

Lord Ealing turned his back on the manager, who continued to hover behind him, muttering heart-broken excuses. "The man's an imbecile," said Lord Ealing,

to the room at large. He turned to the porter. "Here, you, you say the police are coming. Whom did you get at the Yard?"

"Here they are, m'lord," cried the boy, who had slipped to the outer door during the conversation. A moment later, Inspector Blaikie and a plain clothes policeman entered the room.

Who knows how wind of calamity gets abroad? Perhaps the lady in the little office had hinted dreadful things, perhaps some one had overheard the porter at the telephone. At all events, behind the police followed a group of curious onlookers—residents in the hotel, chambermaids, more boys in buttons, a boots or two in shirt sleeves—a mixed assemblage of jostling humanity in which each asked the others for news of what was happening, and, even in Sugden's, social distinctions were for the time half obliterated. All these the Inspector shut out, as he closed the door behind him and turned the key. But a ring of anxious faces stared fixedly at the impenetrable door all through the subsequent proceedings.

A confused medley of voices greeted Inspector Blaikie.

"Who's in charge here?" he asked. "Where's the manager?" Then his eye fell on Lord Ealing, and his authoritative voice became at once deferential. "Your lordship perhaps knows . . ." he began.

"I can soon tell you all I know of the matter, Inspector. I came here by appointment at nine o'clock this morning to breakfast with Mr. Hugh . . . Restington. I was asked to wait below in the lounge while word was sent to him that I had arrived. This boy took the message. A few minutes later he came running down the stairs, shouting something about mur-

der. The hall porter—and the boy—then hurried up here, and I followed them. We found . . . what you had better see for yourself . . . in here." Crossing the room, Lord Ealing flung open again the door of Hugh Restington's bedroom.

Inspector Blaikie cast a keen glance round the room; then, entering carefully, so as to disturb nothing, he looked round more carefully. "And where," he asked, "is the body?"

Several voices replied that the body had not yet been found. "We have made no search: we sent for you at once," said Lord Ealing, "but that room over there appears to be locked." He pointed to the door of the other bedroom.

"Another room?" asked the Inspector.

"Yes. I understand it was occupied last night by Mr. Restington's secretary."

"That is so, my lord," put in the manager. "A Russian," he added, in the tone of one who imputes a crime.

"Have you the key, Mounteagle?" said Lord Ealing.

"The key? Yes, my lord," said the manager. "But your lordship's breakfast . . ."

"Oh, damn my breakfast," said Lord Ealing, really roused at last. "Where's the key?"

While the manager cringed at Lord Ealing's tone, Thomas produced his pass-key, and the Inspector unlocked the door, and entered the room. Lord Ealing stood in the doorway, with the others behind him, peering in.

The blinds in the room were still down, the bed had obviously been slept in, and there were all the ordinary signs of recent occupation. The fitted lavatory basin was still wet, and Blaikie found remains of soap cling-

ing round the edges. But there was nothing abnormal to be seen—no sign of the body which the Inspector had half expected to find. Blaikie stood, looking keenly round. Then he led the way back into the sitting-room. "I'll examine the place later," he said. "Who did you say occupied this room?" he asked.

"A Mr. Rosenbaum, Mr. Restington's private secretary," answered the manager, glancing timidly at Lord Ealing, in fear lest he had again said the wrong thing.

"And what has become of Mr. Rosenbaum?"

" 'E slung 'is 'ook," piped the boy's shrill voice. The manager glanced at him in horrified silence.

"I understand Mr. Rosenbaum left early this morning," said Lord Ealing.

"You keep your head shut," said Thomas to the boy. "Speak when you're spoken to, d'y 'ear?"

"The gen'l'man asked a question," said the boy.

"Thomas and I fetched his luggage down at seven o'clock," said the porter. "He went off in a taxi."

"Mortal heavy it was, too," said Thomas.

"Do you know where he went? Did he leave any address?" asked the Inspector.

"No, sir. He said Mr. Restington would take charge of any letters that came for him." It was the hall porter who replied.

"You don't know where he went?"

"I heard him tell the driver Victoria Station."

"You say his luggage was heavy. What was it?"

"One big trunk. It weighed . . . it was as much as Thomas and I could manage to get it down."

"What did this . . . Russian look like?"

"Very foreign-looking gentleman, sir. Queer-looking, as you might say. Not English, I mean."

"Yes, but I want a better description than that."

"Well, sir, he was tallish, and he wore spectacles and a brown beard. Bushy-like, and his hair was long."

"What colour was it?"

"Well, sir, it wasn't any particular colour. Just brown, it was."

"He had a funny high squeaky voice, sir," said Thomas. "'E spoke very foreign."

"And 'is eyes gleamed 'orrible," said the boy, who was promptly told to shut up.

"This trunk," said the Inspector, "was it heavy enough to have contained a . . . dead body?"

The porter started. "Not being in the habit of carrying corpses myself," he answered, "I can't say as I can rightly tell. But it might have been."

"It was, sir," said Thomas. "I used to work for a undertaker before I came here."

Every one stared silently at Thomas for a moment after this revelation of his past life. Then the Inspector resumed his examination. Rosenbaum, it appeared, had been wearing a dark brown suit of rough tweed, of foreign-looking cut. He had a pronounced stoop, and slouched badly. He seemed to have impressed them all as "not quite a gentleman," so the hall porter put it. The Inspector next secured an exact description of the trunk, which was identified as having formed part of Hugh Restington's baggage on the previous day. It was then, the porter said, remarkably light for its size. It was a big brown trunk, leather covered, and flat topped, and fastened with two straps. Mr. Restington himself had ordered it to be placed in the sitting-room. But some of the other trunks had been very heavy indeed—and no wonder, since they contained all those lumps of rock now lying about the floor of the bedroom.

"Queer stuff to carry about with you," said the Inspector.

"I can explain that," said Lord Ealing; "they are mineral specimens—from Siberia."

"Did Mr. Rosenbaum say anything about the weight of his trunk?"

"Yes, sir, he begged our pardon for it. He said it contained specimens—yes, that's what he said—specimens—he was taking away at Mr. Restington's orders."

"Did you notice any labels on the trunk?"

"There was one or two in a queer, foreign sort of writing—Rooshian, I suppose. And there were some others, but I didn't notice," said the porter.

"Did you notice?" said the Inspector, turning to Thomas.

"Only some steamship labels. I couldn't say exactly what they were."

The Inspector closed his book, and addressed Lord Ealing. "My lord," he said, "I must telephone at once to Scotland Yard, and put them on this man Rosenbaum's track. I shall leave everything here just as it is. Will you be so good as to see nothing is disturbed? I shan't be more than ten minutes."

"I fear I, too, must telephone," said Lord Ealing. "Of course, I will stay and see this through; but I must send a message or two first. You hear, Mounteagle? The Inspector says nothing must be touched."

"Yes, my lord; certainly, my lord. But your lordship's break . . ."

With an inarticulate sound of fury, Lord Ealing strode from the room. After repeating his instructions to the manager that nothing must be touched in his absence, and warning the others, the Inspector followed

Lord Ealing, bidding the plain clothes policeman remain in the corridor, and keep out the crowd. The eyes of the waiting group outside the door watched them along the corridor; but the onlookers held their ground. Suite number five exercised an irresistible fascination.

CHAPTER II

IN WHICH INSPECTOR BLAIKIE DRAWS HIS CONCLUSIONS, AND LORD EALING MAKES A PRIVATE INVESTIGATION

Lord Ealing overtook Inspector Blaikie, and descended with him in the lift. "Well," he asked, "what do you make of it?"

"I very much fear, my lord, that a brutal murder has been committed, and the body carried off in that trunk."

"But why on earth should the murderer carry off the body? Surely it would have been more natural to leave it behind."

"Yes, my lord, that's the puzzle."

"Look here, Inspector. There's one thing you ought to know before you get into touch with the Yard. Restington wasn't the real name of the man who occupied these rooms. There's a long story behind. I will explain later on. But you had better know at once . . ."

In his anxiety, Blaikie interrupted even the great Earl of Ealing. "Yes, who was he then?"

"His real name was Hugh Radlett. Ah, I see that conveys nothing to you."

"Radlett? I seem to know the name."

"Don't you remember the great Radlett disappearance, seven or eight years ago?"

"I ought to, my lord, but I can't. Something in America, wasn't it?"

"Yes, Mr. Radlett was the richest man in America—and that means, in the world."

"It's coming back to me," said Blaikie. "He clean vanished, didn't he, after some trouble with his wife?"

"Yes, a divorce case. When it was over, he simply disappeared. It made a great stir, at the time."

"Eight years ago, you say. Had nothing been heard of him ever since?"

"By the police, no. I have been in touch with him for some time past."

"I see. And you say this Mr. Restington was Hugh Radlett. Are you sure of this, my lord?"

"Absolutely. I was talking to him yesterday afternoon. I'll explain it all later, Inspector. But I wanted you to realise at once that this is going to be a really big case. You'll have to use all your wits on it, Inspector."

"I'll do my best, my lord."

"I'm sure you will. And now, you get on to Scotland Yard and see you wake them up all you can."

Visions of triumphant success came into Inspector Blaikie's mind. His career at Scotland Yard had been humdrum enough for the most part, and in the one great case that had come his way—The Brooklyn Murders—he had to admit that he had not distinguished himself. But here at length had come a chance of retrieving his reputation, and establishing his capacity once and for all. He threw out his chest and made great resolves. Even his chief at Scotland Yard, Superintendent Wilson, who was notoriously a hard man to please, should admit his prowess. And the great Lord Ealing should be shown what a really brainy police officer could do. The road to promotion was sure if he could please Lord Ealing. Already Inspector

Blaikie was beginning to form a theory of the crime, and catching this man Rosenbaum ought to be a fairly simple business. He had so little start. Three hours —a mere nothing. Encumbered by his gruesome burden, he would be caught red-handed within the day.

Blaikie found his chief, Superintendent Wilson, at the Yard, and, as a result of his message, instructions were at once wired to the police throughout the country to be on the look-out for Rosenbaum and his trunk. Watch was set at all the ports; it was nearly impossible he should get away unnoticed. Many a policeman's heart beat faster with the hope of distinction as the messages from the Yard reached him. In a few hours, handbills describing Rosenbaum and the trunk were being posted up on the notice boards. The hunt was up.

Having sent his message over the telephone, merely to say that he would be late in arriving at his office, Lord Ealing hurried back to Hugh Restington's—or rather Radlett's—apartments, forcing his way through the growing crowd which obstructed the corridor. The whole hotel was buzzing with rumours. It was ten o'clock—an hour since the first discovery of the crime. The plain clothes man unlocked the door of the suite for him, and then re-locked it in face of the crowd.

In the sitting-room Lord Ealing found no one remaining except the hotel manager. Inspector Blaikie was still downstairs at the telephone, and the plain clothes policeman remained on guard outside. Murder or no murder, the business of the hotel had to go on, and the manager, relieved of Lord Ealing's oppressive presence, had recovered his authority, and peremptorily despatched Thomas, the hall porter, and the boy in buttons about their daily work. They had been told

not to answer any questions, or give any information, about the crime; and they were all now parrying with dark hints the eager inquiries of the hotel residents and of their fellow-servants. A dozen versions of the mystery, based on these hints, were already abroad.

"I have taken the liberty, my lord," said the hotel manager, with a wave of the hand indicating a tray on which were glasses, whisky and soda, and a plate of sandwiches.

"Thank 'ee, Mounteagle," said Lord Ealing, pouring himself out a stiff whisky and soda. Then he turned again to the manager. "No need to keep you from your work, Mounteagle. You trot off and see those servants don't talk too much."

The manager, still humbly apologetic, retired. Just waiting for the door to close upon him, Lord Ealing sprang into action. He ran to the writing-table, and, working at feverish speed, went through the pile of letters and papers which lay upon it, and in an attaché case which stood there. Apparently, he did not find what he was seeking, for he darted into Radlett's bedroom, and made a hasty search of the papers lying upon the floor. He even looked in the pockets of the clothes lying on a chair. Again his search was apparently fruitless, for he came back into the sitting-room and opened the drawers of the writing-table one by one.

A minute later, he heard Blaikie's voice outside, and quickly took up a negligent attitude on the hearth-rug. Blaikie came in, after exchanging a word with the policeman outside the door. Lord Ealing, munching a sandwich and with his glass in his hand, moved towards the tray. "Dry work, Inspector. Mounteagle is always thoughtful. Help yourself."

"Where's everybody?" asked the Inspector. "I met

the manager outside, and told him to get me ready a full list of all the people in this hotel, and what he knew about each."

"Yes, I told him to buzz off. He had sent the rest away when I got back here. I thought you would sooner have the place to yourself."

Blaikie said nothing. For a few minutes they consumed whisky and sandwiches in silence.

"Now, Inspector," said Lord Ealing, "you'd better have a thorough look round."

"You were going to tell me, my lord, about Mr. Radlett."

"Oh, all in good time. You have a good look round here, and then I'll come to the Yard with you, and say what I have to say to some one in authority. The first thing is to see what there is to be found in these rooms."

The Inspector was obviously crestfallen: he had hoped for Lord Ealing's confidence. But it was no use running the risk of offending the great man. "Very well, my lord, as you think best," he said reluctantly. "Will you join me in examining the rooms?"

"That's your job, Inspector. I'll leave it to you. But let me watch, if I may, and any suggestion I have to make . . ."

Blaikie was a skilled searcher. He seldom missed a clue, though often enough he failed to realise its significance. He was strong on fact, weak on inference. In most of his cases, he provided the facts, and his chief made the deductions. Superintendent Wilson liked working with him for this reason. He used to say that Blaikie had a nose like a ferret—and about the brains of a ferret as well. But Blaikie's chief had no doubts of his own ability, with the invaluable aid of his wife, to supply all the brains that were needed. He could

seldom go out looking for clues; he had to stick to his office. Blaikie could be relied on to bring him the clues, and he could rely on himself to spin truth out of their strands. The Inspector had higher ambitions; but, if he ever made good, it would be on the basis of his plodding capacity for detailed observation.

He began now a systematic search of Hugh Radlett's bedroom, and Lord Ealing followed his movements with close attention. The fallen bedclothes, carefully shaken out and felt over, yielded nothing fresh. The stain on the top sheet, about three inches in diameter, was already dry. On the blanket next to it there was a faint stain, but no blood had penetrated through the top blanket. Blaikie saw that the stain, about eight inches from the top of the sheet, and nearly in the middle, came just about where the turnover would have been—just about the part of the sheet a sleeper might have tucked up under his chin. The stain supported the idea that Hugh Radlett had been murderously assaulted while he was lying in bed—probably asleep.

But he could not have been killed in bed. If he had, whence came the traces of a deadly struggle in the room—the overturned furniture, the broken chair, the ugly smear of blood on the far wall? No, Radlett had been attacked in bed and wounded, but not killed at once. He had leaped from the bed, carrying the bedclothes with him, and probably overturning the bedside table and the lamp. He had grappled with his murderer. More blood had flowed, and somehow, in the swaying struggle, some had been smeared on the wall, possibly as the two men fought, possibly as Radlett fell against it in his last agony. The stain on the wall was about four feet from the ground, just beyond the overturned chair that was also broken.

The Inspector mentally reconstructed the scene. The murderer creeping on his victim as he lay asleep—the uplifted knife—the first murderous blow—the doomed man leaping up—the sharp struggle in the room—the final collapse of the victim—perhaps a finishing stroke from the murderer—and then—silence. He told Lord Ealing what he thought had taken place.

"Silence! But all this struggling must have made an infernal noise. Some one must have heard," suggested Lord Ealing.

True enough, thought the Inspector. The hard struggle could scarcely have been soundless. The furniture and the lamp must have made a clatter as they fell, and—surely Hugh Radlett must have cried out at least once, unless the murderer had him all the time firmly by the throat, which seemed hardly probable. Even if he had not been able to cry out, surely the other noises must have been loud enough to rouse the occupants of the adjoining rooms. The room below, for instance. There must have been a regular series of bumps on the ceiling. Very careful inquiries would have to be made. Some one must have heard. The time at which the crime had taken place could be established by this means.

The Inspector went to the outer door and sent his subordinate to make sure that no one left the hotel until they had been examined. Then he locked the door and turned back to his search of the room. The three open trunks against the wall—their ransacked contents lying on the floor—seemed to tell a plain enough story. The murderer had been looking for something. Having done his evil deed, he had feverishly ransacked his victim's luggage. In search of what? Something fairly small, or all this rummaging

would not have been necessary. Clothes had been ripped up in search of it: the linings of the trunks had been slit. Jewels? Papers? Money? Probably it was of one or other of these that the murderer had been in quest. Had he found it?

At this moment the Inspector's eye fell again on the pile of neatly folded clothes lying on the chair which had escaped overturning in the general havoc. Clearly the clothes Hugh Radlett had been wearing the night before. But why were they untouched? Why had the murderer been at such pains to rip up everything else, only to leave this suit of clothes undisturbed?—Had he found what he wanted before he came to them, or had . . .? Blaikie turned to Lord Ealing.

"It's very curious, my lord, don't you think, this suit of clothes should have been left undisturbed? Everything else is in such a mess."

Lord Ealing thought a moment. "Perhaps the murderer folded them up himself," he said.

"Why? How do you mean, my lord?"

"He might have," said Lord Ealing. "Why do you suppose he carried the body away in the trunk—if he did?"

"Ah, that's not easy to say, my lord. I suppose he needed it for some purpose."

"It seems to me more likely, Inspector, that this Rosenbaum meant to remove all traces of the crime. He carried off the body, because he wanted to make it appear that Radlett had simply disappeared . . . as he did once before, you remember."

"But all this mess . . . all these traces of the crime."

"Oh, of course, if I'm right, he meant to remove those too. How will this fit, Inspector? Rosenbaum meant to carry off the body and get rid of it some-

where, removing all traces of the crime before he went. But, on account of the struggle, the whole affair took longer than he expected, and, by the time he had got the body packed up in the trunk, it was too late to carry out the rest of his plan. He had already folded up those clothes on the chair; but he had to leave the rest. Let's see. He was bound to be ready by seven o'clock, when the men came for his luggage, and he had not left time enough."

"Hm! That means he must have been running things pretty fine."

"But surely, Inspector, murderers do run things pretty fine. No one likes being left alone with his victim's corpse longer than he need be."

"You may be right, my lord. But why did he fold up the clothes? If he wanted to make out that Radlett had disappeared, wouldn't he have taken his clothes away with him?"

"Evening dress, my dear Inspector. A man would not go off in the morning in his evening clothes. The underclothes, I admit, are a difficulty."

"More probably, my lord, the clothes just were on the chair, and the murderer somehow overlooked them. Most murderers overlook something—fortunately for the police."

While they were conversing, Blaikie had gathered up the papers lying scattered on the floor, and carried them into the sitting-room for investigation later. He now went carefully through the clothes, and threw them back into the trunks. There was nothing remarkable about them. Some of the articles were marked "H.R."; others had no marks. Next he began picking up carefully with the aid of a cloth the scattered lumps of rock which had also come out of the trunks. Most of

these the murderer had laid in little piles on the floor —a few had lain strewn among the clothes. Blaikie held one up with a puzzled look.

"Whatever these are," he said, "they ought to be fine stuff for finger prints, unless the fellow was wearing gloves."

"I can tell you at once what they are," said Lord Ealing. "They are mineral specimens of gold-bearing ore. Radlett was to have shown them to me this morning."

Blaikie dusted one of the lumps over with a fine powder—he had, of course, handled them only with a cloth—and blew the dust away. There was no trace of finger prints. Patiently he repeated the process with each lump in turn. He found no traces.

"Nothing there," he said. "The fellow wore gloves. It looks as if he knew his job."

A further minute examination of the room yielded nothing, for the few spent matches, the cigarette end, and the few bits of fluff and cotton, though Blaikie carefully collected them and put them away, were most unlikely to throw any light on the case. Nor was further search for finger prints on the various articles of furniture productive of any result.

"I'll take the sitting-room next," said the Inspector.

Lord Ealing's restlessness increased as Blaikie began to move swiftly about the room, pausing every minute or so to make a note in his book. His eyes kept turning back to the writing-table, and every time the Inspector went near it he made a little nervous movement. By-and-by he went and stood by it himself, still looking over the scattered heaps of papers as if he feared he might have missed that of which he was in search. But Blaikie was too absorbed in his own

investigations to notice Lord Ealing's manner. As he searched and noted, he made his comments aloud, and drew Lord Ealing's attention to each point that seemed to him important. First of all, he went systematically over the floor, though, as he said, there had been too many people in the room already for very plain traces to be left.

On the thick pile of the sitting-room carpet, however, was still plainly visible the place where the missing trunk had stood. Near it the Inspector found traces that something heavy had been dragged along the floor. There were a few spots of blood on the carpet, directly in the line from the sitting-room to the trunk. "This confirms it," said the Inspector. "There's no doubt now he packed the body in the trunk and took it away."

"But why did he take it away? That is what I want to know. If he didn't mean to remove all trace of the crime, I can't see for the life of me why——"

"I think, my lord, you were probably quite right. He did mean to cover up the traces, but he misjudged the time."

"All this would have taken some hiding. That bloodstain on the sheet, and the other on the wall, for example. How would he have hidden them?"

The Inspector slapped his thigh with excitement. "I've got it, my lord. He meant to do the job so that it would leave no trace; but, when he had made all that mess, he had to give up the idea."

"Why didn't he give up the idea of taking the body away as well?"

"Um . . . er . . . to prevent it from being recognised as Mr. Radlett's perhaps."

"No, no, Inspector; if he was Radlett's secretary, he must have known that I knew who Mr. . . . Restington was. It was certain I should tell the police."

"Of course, my lord, I can't say as to that. You haven't told me your story." The note of injury had come again into the Inspector's voice.

Meanwhile he was continuing his examination of the sitting-room. On a side-table stood a portable typewriter of German manufacture, a number of loose papers, and an attaché case. This was shut, but not locked. Opening it, Blaikie found that it had already been ransacked and its lining ripped up in the murderer's search. It had probably been shut, in order that the men coming in the morning to remove the luggage and lay breakfast might see no sign of disturbance. Blaikie left the papers over to examine at leisure.

On the writing-table stood a convenience provided by the hotel for its guests—a box in which letters could be posted for clearance by the staff. It was empty, but it occurred to Blaikie that it would be well worth while to inquire whether any letters had been taken from it on the previous night. The plain clothes man had by this time returned, and Blaikie sent him to fetch Thomas, who, as attendant on the suite, had the duty of clearing the box. Thomas came in a minute later.

"There was no letter in the box last night, m'lord, but there was one this morning. I am afraid I clean forgot it. I cleared it when I came in at seven, and meant to take it down with me to the main box in the hall. Then this dreadful affair put it right out of my head." Thomas put his hand in his pocket and produced the letter. Lord Ealing held out his hand to

take it from him. But Blaikie at once claimed it, and he had perforce to pass it over to the Inspector. It bore a typewritten address: "W. Franklin, Esq., 77 Grays Inn Court, W.C. 1."

"Who's Mr. Franklin, I wonder?" asked the Inspector.

"Mr. Radlett's lawyer," said Lord Ealing. "I know him well. Shall I take the letter and give it to him?"

"No, my lord. I think it is my duty to open it," said Blaikie, cutting the envelope open with a penknife. Inside were two letters, both typewritten—one a brief covering note, the other addressed to Radlett himself. The covering note bore Radlett's autograph signature. It was typed on the hotel notepaper. It ran as follows:

> "Dear Mr. Franklin,—The enclosed, bearing on the matter I discussed with you yesterday, is a copy of a letter I have just received on returning to my hotel. I hasten to send it to you, and will do my best to call to-morrow afternoon and discuss the matter further.
>
> "Yours sincerely,
>
> "H. Radlett."

"I suppose that is Mr. Radlett's signature all right?" asked the Inspector.

Lord Ealing assented. "Undoubtedly it is . . . what is the enclosure?" he inquired.

The Inspector laid it on the table, and both men read it together. It bore no signature, and no address, and was typewritten, with a foreign-looking typewriter, on paper which the Inspector pronounced to be foreign.

"To Hugh Radlett.

"Sir, we know who you are and we know that you have it with you. We have followed you from Russia, and you cannot shake us off. If you value your life, place it in an envelope and despatch it this evening by your secretary to us. Your secretary is to go, at 11 o'clock to-night, to the station at Piccadilly Circus, and is to descend the emergency stairs. Forty-five steps down he will stop and whistle. We will whistle in answer some bars from the song of the Volga Boatmen. He will give it to the man who whistles that song. If you do this, you are free. If you do it not, beware. You know us."

The Inspector read it slowly through. Then he gave a whistle. "And what was 'it,' and who are 'we,' I wonder?" asked Lord Ealing.

"'It' must be a paper or a jewel—the same the murderer was looking for. And 'we' are clearly Russians—probably Bolshevik conspirators," said the Inspector.

Lord Ealing seemed deep in thought. "Yes," he said, "I can imagine some people in Russia taking an interest in our friend's movements. But I can't see what it was they wanted to get hold of, though, of course, Radlett may easily have had something I know nothing about."

"Of course, my lord, as you have not told me the story, I have no idea what all this means," said the Inspector. "What puzzles me is how this fits in with his secretary—the man Rosenbaum—having done the murder. This makes it look more like the work of outsiders."

"Rosenbaum's a Russian, is he not?"

"Yes; but I mean this letter, coming from outside."

"How do you know it came from outside? May not Rosenbaum have written it himself? It orders Radlett to hand the document over to him. The whole story about Piccadilly may be purely a blind—on the evidence, I should say it probably is."

"I dare say you're quite right, my lord. You mean that Rosenbaum tried to get Radlett to give the thing up to him by means of this letter, and, when he wouldn't, murdered him and went off with it."

"Yes, something of that sort. Or he may not have meant to do murder, but only to search Radlett's room while he was asleep. Perhaps he drugged him. Then Radlett woke up, and he had to kill him in order to save himself."

"But, if that's so, why did he order the men the night before to help him with the trunk in the morning? He wouldn't have needed the trunk unless there had been a corpse."

"How do you know, Inspector? He may have meant to go off with a quite ordinary trunkful of clothes."

"I see, and when he had killed his man, that gave him an idea for getting rid of the body."

"Yes, but working out the truth is your business, not mine. When you have done here, I will come with you to Scotland Yard. My car is still outside."

The Inspector, however, had still the other bedroom to examine. He had only glanced round it before, and had come straight back into the sitting-room, closing the door behind him. He now approached the door again, and opened it.

CHAPTER III

IN WHICH MR. ALFRED CULPEPPER MAKES AN UNEXPECTED APPEARANCE

As Blaikie threw open the door of the bedroom lately occupied by the missing Rosenbaum, he started back with a sudden exclamation.

"Listen!" he said to Lord Ealing.

Blaikie had reason to be astonished. From the room, supposed to be empty, came a curious succession of muffled little noises—faint scratching sounds that might have been rats, a curious creaking of woodwork, and with it a sort of stifled sighing, as if there was some one struggling feebly for breath. "My God, there is some one in there," said Blaikie.

"Radlett!" said Lord Ealing.

"The body," said Blaikie.

"If so, it's still alive," said Lord Ealing.

"Stand back, my lord, I must see."

Blaikie entered the room and looked round. There was no sign of any one. But he soon made out that the noises came from a fitted cupboard at the other end of the room. It was sunk in the panelled wall, and he had not noticed it before, when there had certainly been no such sounds emerging from it. The Inspector dashed to the cupboard and flung it open. All he saw was a pile of rugs and eiderdowns lying on the floor. But the pile was heaving as if somebody was im-

prisoned underneath. Blaikie seized them and threw them out on to the floor. When he saw what lay beneath he gave another cry.

"He's here. I've found him."

"Is it Radlett?" asked Lord Ealing, appearing from the sitting-room, where he had been continuing, still unsuccessfully, his search for the something he still strove feverishly to find.

"Will you lend a hand, my lord?" said the Inspector, drawing a human form, gagged and bound hand and foot, out of the cupboard. The form spluttered feebly, and its eyes glared angrily.

Lord Ealing came forward, and saw.

"That," he said, with an air of disgust, "that's not Radlett."

"Then who is it? Rosenbaum?" asked the Inspector, still, in his perplexity, making no attempt to untie the unfortunate man.

Lord Ealing had been staring at the prostrate figure. "It looks like a fellow called Culpepper," he said.

"Who on earth is Culpepper?" asked Blaikie. "What is he doing here?"

"I think," said Lord Ealing, "perhaps you had better undo him and inquire. He seems to be getting a little impatient."

The unfortunate creature was, indeed, struggling violently in his tight bonds, and making frantic efforts to speak through his gag. But he could only splutter. He had plainly been tied up by an expert.

Blaikie bent down, and, after a little difficulty, removed the gag. "Who the devil are you?" he asked, as soon as the man's mouth was free.

"D-d-d-damned scoundrel," said Mr. Culpepper.

"Oh, the villain," he squeaked. A sense of his wrongs overcame him and he began to cry.

"Come, come, what are you doing here, and what do you know about this affair?" said the Inspector. "Pull yourself together, man."

"L-l-left me here all this t-time," said Mr. Culpepper through his tears. "I heard you."

"Answer my question," said the Inspector. "Who are you?"

"Alf . . . Alfred C-Culpepper. You m-might have un-t-t-t-tied me before."

"We did not know you were here," said the Inspector.

"A quite unexpected pleasure, Culpepper," said Lord Ealing.

"Now, what are you doing here?" asked Blaikie.

But this merely stimulated Mr. Culpepper's tears afresh. "Oh, a d-dreadful m-m-m-man!" he sobbed.

"What did he do to you?"

"T-t-t-t-tied me . . . up," said Mr. Culpepper.

"Get the fellow a drink, Blaikie," said Lord Ealing. "That may cheer him up. And let me talk to him. I'll undo the rest of him."

Blaikie got a neat whisky and held it to Culpepper's lips, while Lord Ealing cut away his bonds. Then the two men helped him to his feet, and laid him down on the bed. He looked very small and feeble, as he lay there and blinked, coughing each time he swallowed a mouthful of the whisky.

"Who is he, my lord? You seem to know him."

"I know the fellow slightly. As it happens, he came to see me yesterday. His name is Alfred Culpepper, and he is a wholesale coal merchant, trading on the Continent. I believe his office is in Paris. That's all

I know about him. I've not the slightest idea what he's doing here."

"Did he know Radlett?"

"Yes, he did. He had brought me letters from him once or twice. He had some dealings with my firm—the Anglo-Asiatic Corporation, you know."

"Let's see if he's well enough to talk yet. Now, my man, you try to answer my questions. How did you get into that cupboard?"

"I c-came to c-call."

"To call? On whom?"

"On Mr. R-R-Rad—R-R-R-Restington."

"That's all right. We know Mr. Restington's real name was Radlett. You came to call. When?"

"L-last night."

"Was Rosenbaum with Mr. Radlett when you called?"

This name was too much for Mr. Culpepper. "Oh, the dreadful villain," he said again.

"Who is a dreadful villain?"

"R-R-Ros—R-R-Rosenbaum. Oh, please, l-let me alone."

It took another stiff application of whisky to bring Mr. Culpepper back to a mood of reason.

At last, by a long process of cross-examination, in which Lord Ealing took the principal part, they extracted his story, mixed with a great deal of lamentation about his unhappy fate.

He had known Radlett years ago, in Asiatic Russia, where he had been in business as a merchant. His business had been destroyed by the Revolution, but he had been lucky enough to escape, and had finally set up for himself in Paris, and had built up a connection in the supply of coal to the countries of Central Europe.

About a year before, he had run across Radlett, quite by accident, in Warsaw, and had given him his address. Since then, they had met and corresponded occasionally. Radlett told him when he would be in London, and, finding that he would be there on business at the same time, had asked him to call and see him at Sugden's Hotel. Accordingly, he had called on the previous afternoon, but had found Radlett out. He had come back after dinner, at about nine o'clock, and had then found Radlett and Rosenbaum together. They had sat up talking until late, and he had missed his last train. Radlett's secretary had gone to bed before that, and Radlett had given him a shake-down in his sitting-room, providing him with the rugs and wraps which had been found in the cupboard with him. He had gone to sleep on the sofa near the fire. Later, at what hour he could not say, except that it was still nearly dark, he had been awakened by a commotion coming from Radlett's bedroom. There were sounds of a struggle, of furniture being thrown down, and some cries. He had been terrified, and had stayed cowering where he was, wondering what he ought to do. Then the door of Radlett's bedroom had opened, and the secretary—Rosenbaum—had appeared, carrying Radlett's lifeless body. The light in the bedroom was on, and he could see plainly. He had sprung up, and Rosenbaum had seen him. He wanted to cry out, but he found he could not make a sound. Rosenbaum had dropped the body when he saw him, and whipped out a revolver. Covering Culpepper, he told him he was a dead man if he made a sound or moved an inch. The wretch had obeyed, and Rosenbaum, still keeping him covered with the revolver, had made him empty the big trunk which stood in the sitting-room and

carry the contents—papers and mineral specimens—into Radlett's bedroom. Then he had made him help lift the body into the trunk, wedge it in with papers and clothes brought from the other room, and cord it up securely. Having done this, he had made Culpepper fetch a glass full of water from the bedroom, had poured into it something from a phial in his pocket, and bidden him drink it.

Fearing poison, Culpepper had prayed for mercy, but Rosenbaum had told him it would do him no harm, and had forced him to drink it by again threatening to shoot him. After that, he remembered nothing. He had lost consciousness, and had only come to himself when he heard voices and persons moving. He had tried to cry out; but he found he was gagged and bound, and he could neither move nor utter a syllable. The persons had gone away, and he had heard the door close. After a while, he wriggled himself a little free, so that he could utter faint sounds and scratch the woodwork of the place where he was confined. But the air was bad, and he was feeling very faint. It seemed to him as if many hours had passed, and he had lost consciousness several times, before he was finally discovered by Lord Ealing and the Inspector.

"At what time did all this happen?" asked Blaikie.

But Mr. Culpepper could give no idea of the time, except that it was beginning to get light when Rosenbaum made him pack the body in the trunk. Blaikie tried to get a more definite answer on this point, but without success. He tried another line.

"You knew this man Rosenbaum?" he asked.

Culpepper replied that he had never seen him until the previous day. Asked to describe him, he was

hardly more explicit than the vague descriptions already furnished by the hotel servants. Rosenbaum was tall, dark-haired, with heavy beard and moustache, very foreign looking, and with a strong Russian accent. Undoubtedly a Russian Jew. Radlett had told him that the man was his secretary—a recent acquisition, and one in whose capability he took great pride.

"You say Rosenbaum had gone to bed before Radlett made you your shake-down on the sofa. Did Rosenbaum know you were staying the night?"

"No. He was t-taken quite aback when he saw me. W-hat he said was, 'You there, you little rat,' in Russian." Culpepper repeated the words as Rosenbaum had said them.

"He must have passed through the sitting-room to Radlett's bedroom—probably in the dark—without noticing you on the sofa."

Culpepper agreed.

"Have you any idea why he wanted to take the body away?"

"He d-didn't say."

"I suppose you are quite sure Mr. Radlett was dead?" asked Lord Ealing.

Culpepper replied, with a shudder, that he was sure. Radlett looked ghastly, he said. His face was covered with blood, and there was blood all over his clothing.

"What was Mr. Radlett wearing?"

"He was in his p-pyjamas."

"Have you formed any view of the reason why Rosenbaum took Mr. Radlett's life?"

"None at all."

There was clearly nothing further to be got out of Mr. Culpepper. Blaikie called in his subordinate, and

instructed him to 'phone to Scotland Yard for a man who could accompany Culpepper to his home. Culpepper explained that he was over on a short visit from Paris, and that he wished to go to his sister's house in Enfield, where he was staying. Blaikie told his assistant to arrange for him to be kept under observation by the local police. His story seemed clear enough, but the Inspector was not a man to overlook any possible clue to the case. He determined to find out all about Mr. Culpepper and his business in Paris and London.

There was still a good deal to be done at the hotel, especially in inquiring whether any one besides Culpepper had heard a noise in Radlett's rooms in the early hours of the morning. But this, Blaikie decided, could wait for an hour or two. There had been so many exciting developments that it was high time for him to report fully on the case to Superintendent Wilson at Scotland Yard. Moreover, there was Lord Ealing's story to be heard, and that he would only tell in the Superintendent's presence.

Blaikie saw the manager, and ensured that Radlett's rooms should remain undisturbed in his absence. He also had all the hotel guests informed that they must report on their movements, and hold themselves in readiness to answer any questions put to them. Then, leaving his assistant on guard at the hotel, Blaikie accepted Lord Ealing's invitation, and drove off with him to Scotland Yard in his car. He felt that he had done well so far, for though, to be sure, he might have found Mr. Culpepper a bit sooner, no harm had come of the delay. The Inspector was glowing with self-approval. Lord Ealing was still worried. He had not found what he wanted. Was it in the rooms, waiting

for the police to find it? Or had the murderer got it? Or was it safely destroyed? Lord Ealing did not want either Rosenbaum or the police to have possession of that scrap of paper. Deuced awkward it would be if it came out!

CHAPTER IV

IN WHICH SUPERINTENDENT WILSON HEARS THE STORY OF A GREAT CONCESSION

Superintendent Wilson received Lord Ealing and Inspector Blaikie in his room. Two hours had passed since he had received, over the telephone, Blaikie's first intimation of the nature of the affair, and of the identity of the victim. At once he had set his men to work. Every routine precaution that could be taken in order to prevent Rosenbaum's escape had been taken without the loss of a moment. It would be ill-luck indeed if the fellow contrived to slip through the network of the police system which the Superintendent so efficiently controlled. The taxi-driver who had taken up Rosenbaum at the hotel was even now being searched for; several suspicious characters had already been detained at the docks. But for any measures going beyond routine, the Superintendent had perforce to await the result of Blaikie's investigations on the spot. When the Inspector 'phoned a second time to say that Lord Ealing himself wished to come round to the Yard and make a statement, Wilson at once decided to receive his distinguished visitor in person, and to give his own best attention to the case. In the meantime, he put it out of his mind. "I shall only get a wrong idea," he said to himself, "if I start theorising without some further data."

Superintendent Wilson was at this time easily the

most celebrated detective in England—official or unofficial. In one case after another he had proved his capacity, both as an investigator and as a leader of men. He was an excellent investigator himself, but he was best of all at guiding the work of his subordinates. His was the co-ordinating brain that had raised Scotland Yard to a standard of efficiency hitherto unknown in its long career. When foolish persons asked him for the secret of his success, he made invariably the same reply. "I never get flurried," he would say; "I just think." To his friends he would add that all his best work was due to his wife. He would tell her all about his most difficult cases, and she would never fail, he said, to give him just the hint he needed in order to arrive at the truth. And, if you questioned Mrs. Wilson, she would laugh and say, "I'm sure, my dear, I don't do anything. But Henry likes telling me. I let him talk, and he says it helps him." Then she would resume talking about the children—her one unfailing topic of conversation.

Wilson received Lord Ealing deferentially, and yet with familiarity. Lord Ealing had been Home Secretary in the last Government but three, and Inspector Wilson, as he then was, had done good service, and been complimented on his skill in solving the Sussex Street case, which had promised to lead to certain awkward political complications. Lord Ealing knew that the Superintendent had brains, and Wilson did not underrate Lord Ealing's abilities. He also knew a thing or two about that nobleman which Lord Ealing fondly believed to be quite unsuspected in official quarters. The Superintendent had few illusions left. He approached the case with an open mind, well assured that Lord Ealing would tell just as much, or just as little, as

it suited him to tell. Of course, it might suit him to tell everything. If so, well and good. On the other hand, it might not: in that case, Wilson was ready to use his wits for reading between the lines.

He rose as the two men entered, and motioned Lord Ealing to a chair opposite his own. Blaikie took a seat beside his chief.

"If your lordship is willing," said Wilson, "I should like the Inspector to hear what you have to say. He has the case in hand. Thank you, my lord. Blaikie, you have your notes?"

"How I came to be mixed up in this affair——" began Lord Ealing.

"One moment, my lord. I do not yet know how the case stands. I think it will be best if the Inspector begins by giving me a full account of what he had found out so far, and then you can tell us what you know."

"My time is valuable," said Lord Ealing.

"I am sorry; but I think you will realise that my way is best, my lord."

Wilson's manner was still deferential, but his words were peremptory. They said to Lord Ealing plainly that he was Home Secretary no longer, and that the representative of Scotland Yard would stand no nonsense even from the richest man in England.

Lord Ealing drew himself up resentfully. Then he laughed. "Oh, have it your own way, Wilson," he said, "only hurry up."

"Thank you, my lord. Now, Inspector."

Slowly and methodically, Inspector Blaikie related exactly what he had found at the hotel, and what inferences he had made. His chief listened, with eyes closed, as his way was, legs thrust out in front of him and the tips of his fingers pressed tightly together.

Occasionally he asked a question, in order to clear up a point of fact; occasionally, too, he made a note on the memorandum block before him. But he offered no comment. Even when Blaikie related the discovery of Mr. Culpepper in the cupboard, he only said, "Hm." And when Inspector Blaikie had done all he said was, "Thank you, Inspector. Now, my lord, it is your turn." And again he closed his eyes and composed himself to listen. Lord Ealing said afterwards that it was like talking to a dictaphone—a machine that recorded everything and gave nothing back.

"I had better begin at the beginning," said Lord Ealing. "You probably know that I am Chairman of the Anglo-Asiatic Commercial Corporation. About six months ago I received a letter, addressed to me personally, from Mr. Hugh Radlett, the American millionaire." Wilson nodded. "I was naturally very much surprised, for I remembered the excitement caused by his disappearance from America eight years ago—the result of some family trouble, I believe. Nothing, so far as I knew, had been heard of him since. In his letter, Mr. Radlett stated that he had spent these eight years in Asiatic Russia—a good part of them in prison. He had passed safely, though not with comfort, through the successive revolutions and counter-revolutions which had swept over Siberia, and he had just come from Moscow, where he had been arranging for a great commercial venture. He——"

"Did you notice the post-mark of his letter?"

"Yes, it was posted at Reval. Mr. Radlett began by reminding me of certain past business dealings between him and the Anglo-Asiatic, and said that, though he had not met me personally, he hoped these would serve as an introduction."

"Then you did not know Mr. Radlett?"

"No. I met him for the first time yesterday. He had spent these years, as I say, in Russia, apparently with no very definite object in view. There he had met a man named John Pasquett, a French-Canadian by origin, whom he had previously known slightly in America. They had become friends, and Pasquett had told him a tale, which at first he had not believed, of a fabulously rich deposit of gold he had discovered when prospecting on the Yenisei River. Pasquett was a gold-mining expert. Radlett had at length been induced to accompany him on a visit to the place where the gold was, and, by thorough tests, he had proved beyond all possible doubt that what Pasquett said was true. He had then agreed, in the autumn of 1916, to go into the thing with Pasquett. They drew up a deed of partnership, under which Radlett was to supply the capital and they were to share equally in the proceeds, Pasquett's discovery of the gold ranking as his contribution.

"The two men then started out for Petrograd, with the object of negotiating with the Czar's Government for a concession of the whole gold-bearing area. Of course, Radlett was immensely wealthy, and could readily have financed even so big a thing. But they never reached their destination. While they were on their way, the first Revolution broke out—early in 1917—and they were both arrested under suspicion of being Czarist agents, and thrown into prison somewhere in Siberia. The next four years they seem to have spent mostly in prison, but at last they escaped, or were released—I am not quite sure which—and succeeded in getting to Moscow. At least, Radlett did. Pasquett apparently had escaped, too, but

I am not sure whether he went to Moscow with Radlett.

"At Moscow, Radlett at length succeeded in opening up negotiations with the Bolshevik Government. The Soviets, he said, seemed firmly established, and he did not see why he should not get the concession out of them, where he had meant to get it from the Czarist Government. He found they were anxious to attract foreign capitalists, especially Americans. As you know, they badly wanted recognition from the United States.

"At length he was successful. He obtained, from Lenin himself, a signed and sealed concession of the whole area he had surveyed with Pasquett, for a period of thirty years, and subject to a number of conditions.

"All this time he was still working in close association with Pasquett, and the concession was made out in their joint names, with power to add other partners, subject to the Government's consent. The question was how to proceed. Radlett's difficulty was that, as the United States had refused to recognise the Soviet Government, he could expect no protection from the American authorities. Pasquett, however, was a British subject, and he felt the concession would be a great deal more secure if they could get the protection of the British Government behind it. There was a trade agreement in force between Great Britain and Russia, and they resolved to enlist British help. Radlett said he naturally thought at once of the Anglo-Asiatic as the biggest British concern interested in Siberian development. He therefore wrote to me, asking whether my board would be likely to consider a definite offer to come in with them. If so, either he or Pasquett would come over to London in order to discuss matters fully, and to place in our hands full proofs of the soundness

of the enterprise. If I thought well of the scheme, he asked me to reply at once to 'Robertson, Poste Restante, Reval,' cabling simply the one word, 'Come.'

"I talked matters over informally with my Board, and they thought the scheme worth considering. I therefore cabled. Several more letters passed between us. In his final letter, Radlett gave some further details about the terms of the concession, and said he would come to London at once with mineral specimens and all the necessary documents. He mentioned an approximate date for his arrival, and asked me to book a suite for him at the best quiet hotel I knew. His secretary, he said, would accompany him, and Pasquett would follow a little later. He also asked me to recommend him to a thoroughly reliable solicitor, and I advised him to go to Mr. Franklin, to whom the letter found in his rooms was addressed."

At this point the Superintendent asked Lord Ealing to pause for a moment, while he sent a message. Over the internal telephone he then told a police officer to go at once to Mr. Franklin's office, and bring him to Scotland Yard as soon as he could be found. This done, he asked Lord Ealing to go on with his story.

"I then engaged rooms for Radlett at Sugden's Hotel. Four days ago I received a wire from Paris saying that he would arrive on the seventeenth; that is, yesterday. During the afternoon of yesterday he called at my office, and found me just leaving for an important meeting. We did no more than exchange a few words, and arrange to breakfast together at his hotel this morning. You know the rest. I think that is all I can tell you."

"At what time did you arrange to breakfast with Mr. Radlett?"

"Nine o'clock. I wrote it down."

"That's curious," the Inspector broke in. "He ordered breakfast for 9.30, and said he was not to be called until ten past nine."

"I suppose he made a mistake about the time. I am quite certain he said nine o'clock."

"Do you know at all," asked the Superintendent, "what else Mr. Radlett did in London yesterday?"

"He told me he had lunched at the hotel, and that he had a lot to do; but I did not inquire further."

"Did he say anything of importance while he was with you?"

"We were hardly together ten minutes. As far as I remember, he said it was a great pleasure to be back in civilised surroundings again, and thanked me for fixing him up so comfortably. About the business matter, he only said he was sure it was a thoroughly sound thing."

"I suppose his secretary—this man Rosenbaum—was not with him. Did he mention him at all?"

"No. He was alone. He had spoken of his secretary in one of his letters, but he did not mention him yesterday."

"In the letter, did he tell you anything about him?"

"No. He did not even mention his name."

"About this concession. I understand it was a big thing."

"Distinctly. If it came off, both he and my Board were to find a million pounds apiece. More might have been needed later to develop it fully."

"Who could have had an interest in stopping the whole affair?"

"So far as I am aware, no one in this country had heard of it, except myself and my Board. Though, of

course, there had been rumours. Of course, I cannot answer for Russia."

"You mean that it looks as if the source of this murder were in Russia. That, of course, would make it difficult to trace. We have no connection now with the Russian police."

"Mr. Pasquett, when he comes, may be able to throw some light on it."

"Yes, I suppose you have not heard from him."

"No. We have never been in direct touch with Mr. Pasquett. He is expected here in a week or so, I believe."

"Do you know where he is now?"

"I have not the least idea. 'Robertson & Co., Post Restante, Reval,' is the only address I have ever had for either of them."

"We will, of course, make inquiries at Reval. And, if you hear, you will please let us know at once. I shall be glad if you will lend me those letters and cables you have had from Mr. Radlett. They may possibly tell us something further. I know your time is precious, Lord Ealing, I won't keep you any longer."

Superintendent Wilson had risen from his seat, and was holding out his hand. Lord Ealing took it. "You understand," he said, "that my Board will be most anxious to have this matter cleared up—and to get in touch with Mr. Pasquett as soon as possible."

"Certainly, my lord. You may rely on us to do our best."

Lord Ealing then went away, leaving the two police officers alone. Wilson turned at once to Blaikie. "You get straight back to the hotel," he said, "and find out what more you can. Somebody must have

heard something. Then 'phone me up, and we'll have a late lunch together, and discuss the whole case."

"What do you make of it, sir?"

"Oh, it looks simple enough. Murder—by this Russian fellow, Rosenbaum. But there are some queer features about it. I don't know yet. I want to think."

When Blaikie had gone, Wilson plunged his hands deep into his pockets, put his feet on the desk, closed his eyes, and settled down to think things over. Why on earth had the murderer gone off with the body?

CHAPTER V

SHOWING THE SORT OF PERSON WHO STAYS AT SUGDEN'S HOTEL, AND THE HALL PORTER'S OPINION OF BOLSHEVIKS

On his return to the hotel, Inspector Blaikie settled down seriously to the task of interviewing every one who might be able to throw further light on the tragedy. He first called on the manager, and obtained the use of a private room adjoining the suite in which the crime had been committed. Mr. Mounteagle had by this time largely recovered from the shock, and he was by no means so frightened of the Inspector as of Lord Ealing. Indeed, he was now inclined to visit on Blaikie some of his resentment at the evil thing which had befallen his beautiful hotel. But his chief desire was to keep things as quiet as possible, and he realised that it was best to be on good terms with the police.

He had completed a list of the hotel guests, and this he read over. They were all, in his view, quite above suspicion. The young Marquis of Fishguard and the Marchioness—she used to be Miss Betty Bunch, the actress—Lord Walbottle, Sir Michael and Lady Moss-Montmorency, the Hon. Algernon Nashe and Mr. Bert Bentley, two young gentlemen from Cambridge—of very good families, Dr. Vigor Vim, the fashionable lecturer, Lady Lostwithiel, the dowager, not the one who lost her jewels, Mrs. Casey-Compton of Abbedale, and Mr. Adair. Sugden's certainly had the secret of attracting the right people.

Blaikie inquired which of these distinguished people occupied rooms in the neighbourhood of suite number five, and so would have been likely to hear the sounds of the struggle. He found that the room immediately below Radlett's bedroom had been occupied by Lady Lostwithiel, who was unfortunately as deaf as a post. On one side of the bedroom was Radlett's sitting-room; on the other was the sitting-room which the manager had assigned to the Inspector. It had been empty during the night. Across the passage was the room of the Honourable Algernon Nashe.

It seemed a forlorn hope, but Blaikie had all the guests he could find sent up to him one by one. Lady Lostwithiel, an old lady of repellent aspect, came first, accompanied by her maid and a large ear-trumpet. After several minutes of ineffectual bellowing, the Inspector was quite content to believe that she had heard nothing. She retired, scolding her maid; for Blaikie had affected her temper, and the maid was paid to be scolded at need.

Next came the Honourable Algernon Nashe, with an eye-glass, a small, fair moustache, a receding chin, and his mouth hanging open. He had heard nothing. He had come in late, with his friend Bentley, from Moray's. "Not a bally whisper," he repeated. "Not in the habit of listenin' at keyholes." If you asked him it all came of havin' fellers like this Russian feller stoppin' in a decent hotel. Blaikie had not asked him, and said so, with some asperity. He withdrew, to inform the world that these policemen were gettin' damned impertinent.

There followed other interviews, equally unproductive. Mr. Adair had left early in the morning, but as he had slept at the other end of the hotel, Blaikie did not think it worth while to follow him up. Mr. Adair

was well known—the perfect clubman, the perfect week-end guest—*et practerea nihil.*

Otherwise, the Inspector saw every guest, and made sure that no one had heard a suspicious sound during the night. He transferred his attention to the hotel servants. First, he sent for Mr. Sacheverell—the hall porter.

"At what time," he added, "did Mr. Radlett arrive here yesterday?"

"About midday, sir. He had lunch sent up to his rooms at once."

"Did Rosenbaum lunch with him?"

"Yes, sir. He had lunch for two sent up to his room."

"What did he do after that?"

"At about a quarter-past two he came down and went out. He picked up a taxi for himself just outside. I saw no more of him till just before dinner time. He came back then, and, I believe, dined in his room."

"Did he go out again?"

"No, sir, I believe not. I go off duty at nine; but the night porter says he did not go out while he was here."

"Nor his secretary either?"

"No; but about a quarter to nine that chap—the Rooshian—came down, and asked me if Mr. Restington had arranged about a taxi for the morning. I said 'yes,' Mr. Restington had asked me to order one for seven o'clock. He said we must fetch his luggage down at five to seven. He also said he didn't want to be called, as he would wake himself with an alarm clock. He told me to be very particular not to call Mr. Restington till ten past nine, as he was a very particular gentleman. I said I would tell Thomas, and he said I must be sure not to forget, as it was important. Then he went upstairs again. That was the last I saw of

him till I went up to fetch his luggage this morning. It was that heavy, Thomas had to help me down with it, though it isn't his work."

"Did this Mr. Rosenbaum go out with Mr. Radlett yesterday afternoon?"

"No, sir, Mr. Rest . . . Radlett was alone when he went out."

"Did Rosenbaum go out alone, or did he stay in the hotel all the time?"

"He didn't go out—not while I was on duty."

"Would you have been sure to see him if he had gone out?"

"Well, nearly sure, sir. I wasn't out of the hall five minutes till I went off duty at night."

"Did any one call to see Mr. Radlett?"

"Yes, the same gentleman that was found in the cupboard. He called at about five. But Mr. Radlett was out, and he wouldn't see his secretary. He left a message he would come back later."

"Do you know when he came back?"

"About half an hour before I went off duty. A little before half-past eight."

"Then the night porter did not know he was in the hotel."

"No, sir. Of course, I supposed he had left later, while the night porter was on duty. It never occurred to me he was in that cupboard."

"Naturally. Did any one else call?"

"No, not while I was there. And I've asked the night porter, and he says the same."

"Is that all you know about this business? Is there anything else you can tell me?"

"Well, sir, I didn't like that Rosenbaum's looks at all. A nasty, foreign-looking fellow. He looked just

like one of them Bolsheviks you see in the papers. I was reading in the *Express* only the other day——"

Blaikie hastily cut short Mr. Sacheverell's reflections, and asked the porter to send Thomas to his room. The attendant of suite number five said that he had been in the sitting-room when Radlett arrived, shortly before lunch time, and had directed the bestowal of his luggage. Radlett had ordered lunch for two in his rooms, but had told him not to wait, and he and his secretary would look after themselves. He had brought in lunch, and Radlett had told him to come back and clear away in an hour's time. When he came back to clear, Radlett, who had presumably gone out, was not in the room, but Rosenbaum was there. He had not previously seen the secretary, whose foreign appearance he specially noted. Rosenbaum, on Radlett's behalf, had ordered a simple dinner for two to be sent up to his rooms at 7.30, and had said that Thomas would again not be required to wait on them. He spoke fluent English, but with a strong foreign accent. Thomas had gone away to order dinner, and had not returned to the suite till seven o'clock, when he laid dinner and did up the bedrooms. There was no one in the rooms at that time. At half-past seven he had placed dinner on the table.

"Were Mr. Radlett and his secretary back by then?"

"Yes, sir. Mr. Rosenbaum was sitting at the writing-table when I went in. I noticed what a queer-looking chap he was. After a minute, he got up and went into Mr. Radlett's bedroom. I heard them both talking in there. I put things ready and withdrew."

"Did you clear away later?"

"Yes, at about half-past eight. Mr. Restington—I mean Mr. Radlett—was in the sitting-room then. He

told me to be sure not to disturb them again that night, and not to call him till ten past nine in the morning. He said he had given the hall porter directions about getting a taxi at seven o'clock for his secretary, but would I remind him. There was another gentleman there, too—the same gentleman you found in the cupboard this morning. They were talking about old times in Russia."

"Was Rosenbaum there too?"

"No, sir, not then. He was in his bedroom. There were just Mr. Radlett, and the little gentleman."

"Culpepper, you mean."

"Yes, sir. I asked Mr. Radlett if he had any orders, and he said 'No.' Then I said could I go into his bedroom to tidy up, and he said, 'Yes,' but I wasn't to bother about Mr. Rosenbaum's as he was busy in there just then. I said I could come back later; but he said I could leave it till the morning. I went off duty a short time after that. When I was in the hall I saw Mr. Rosenbaum speaking to the hall porter. After that, I saw no more of either of them till this morning."

Thomas had nothing more to tell, and from the remaining servants Blaikie learned nothing at all. The boy in buttons evolved a startling theory that Radlett's body was hidden in the hotel; but, as this appeared to be based on no evidence, Blaikie speedily dismissed him. Returning to Radlett's rooms, he went carefully round them again. He then instructed his subordinate, who was still on guard there, to collect all the papers and other exhibits bearing on the crime, and take them away for safe keeping to the Yard for further examination. On his way out of the hotel, he paused to exchange a few words with the lady in the little office, and to examine the visitors' book. There

were the entries "Hugh Restington" and "Ivan Rosenbaum," both of Reval. Both entries were in Radlett's writing, with the unmistakable flourish Blaikie had noticed in looking over the papers found upstairs. Having finished his work, he passed out of the door. Sugden's breathed more freely when he had gone. Mr. Mounteagle began to raise up his head and think more courageously of the future. Perhaps the reputation of Sugden's would outlive the shock; perhaps the great Lord Ealing was not irreparably offended. Police were vulgar people. Necessary, of course, for the protection of property and the Constitution—but dreadfully vulgar. Excellent in their place; but their place was not Mr. Mounteagle's incomparable hotel. A glass of old port in his private room freshened the manager up wonderfully. He faced the complaints of Lady Lostwithiel with his customary deferential *aplomb*.

CHAPTER VI

IN WHICH MR. FRANKLIN EXPLAINS THE WILL OF A MILLIONAIRE, AND SUGGESTS A MOTIVE

WHILE Inspector Blaikie was pursuing his inquiries at the hotel, Superintendent Wilson's emissary had found the lawyer of whom he had been sent in search, and had brought him back post haste to Scotland Yard. Hugh Radlett's solicitor was personally an insignificant little rat of a man, very thin and meagre, with a dry, wrinkled face like parchment, and a pair of very bright, deep-sunken eyes, that darted restlessly about, flashing and twinkling, as it seemed, from somewhere deep inside his head. He was clean-shaven, and sharp-featured—a lawyer confessed in every detail of his appearance. His clothes were good, but worn ill and hanging loosely on him, crumpled and awry. Only his top hat was immaculately bright.

As Mr. Wilbraham Franklin entered Wilson's room, he gave a series of sharp glances round him, as if he were taking a quick mental inventory of his surroundings. He spoke in answer to Wilson's greetings; his voice was hard, precise, incisive.

"Morning, morning. Met you before, Superintendent. Chilcot case, yes. Terrible business this—terrible. Mr. Radlett—hey—murdered? So your man tells me. Terrible, terrible."

"Ah, yes, Mr. Franklin, I remember you. You held a watching brief. Quite so. Yes, I fear Mr. Radlett

has been made away with. I had better give you an outline of the case. You were acting, I believe, for Mr. Radlett?"

Franklin said he was, and Wilson then gave him a brief general account of the case, ending up with the discovery, in Radlett's rooms, of the letter addressed to his lawyer, with the remarkable enclosure.

"A piece of luck, sir, that it escaped the murderer's notice. I understand you saw Mr. Radlett yesterday?"

"Yes, he called on me yesterday afternoon, at about five o'clock. He asked me to act as his legal adviser in this country. As he brought a letter of introduction from Lord Ealing, who had mentioned the matter to me previously, I at once agreed."

"I should like you to tell me exactly what took place between you."

"Of course, Superintendent, our clients' business is strictly confidential as a rule. But, as it happens, Mr. Radlett himself told me, if any trouble arose, to give the fullest information to the police." Franklin said this very quietly, as if it were not at all a startling piece of information.

Wilson sat up straight, showing surprise. "Do you mean he anticipated trouble?" he asked.

"Undoubtedly he thought it possible. He was even coming round to Scotland Yard this morning to ask for police protection."

"Police protection? What was he afraid of?"

"He said he had been pursued to this country by enemies who would stick at nothing, and meant to put him out of the way if they could."

"Enemies? What sort of enemies?"

Franklin's beady little eyes fixed themselves on Wilson as he replied.

"Bolsheviks! You know, I expect, that he was engaged in a big business deal with Russia—a mining concession." Wilson nodded. "He said that, while he had secured the concession from the Soviet Government, there was a group among the Bolsheviks very anxious to prevent it from going through. They tried to get him in Reval, and failed, and he said they had pursued him here in order to get hold of certain papers, and very likely kill him into the bargain."

"Ah, yes. It was evident the murderer had been searching for certain papers. Have you any idea what they were?"

"An excellent idea, I should suppose. Mr. Radlett deposited with me yesterday—here it is—a concession, duly signed and sealed, from the Council of People's Commissaries to Hugh Radlett, John Pasquett, and such partners as they may, with the consent of the said Council, hereafter associate with themselves. The document grants to the assignees a thirty years' lease, renewable on certain conditions for a further term of thirty years, of a large tract of country, situate on the Lower Yenisei River, with rights of exploitation over all metals and minerals found therein. It is personally signed by Lenin—Vladimir Ulianov there, I understand, is his signature—and other commissaries of the one part, and by Hugh Radlett and John Pasquett of the other part. You had better look at it yourself. Mr. Radlett left it with me for safe keeping yesterday afternoon."

Wilson took the document and glanced through it. It was a large official-looking paper, written, in parallel columns, in both Russian and English. The witnesses to the signatures were Russians. The paper bore the official seal of the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics.

"Lord Ealing spoke to me of this," said the Superintendent. "I think he was afraid it had fallen into the murderer's hands. It is a very big thing, I understand, this concession?"

"Immense."

"He was proposing to work it in partnership with the Anglo-Asiatic, was he not?"

"Quite, quite. He had come here to settle the matter with Lord Ealing."

"Now, as for this information Mr. Radlett was proposing to convey to Scotland Yard. Can you tell me what it was?"

"Unfortunately, no. He gave me no details. He only said he had received several threatening letters."

Wilson sighed. "There's valuable evidence gone west," he said. "It may be hard to pick up the trail now. Unless this Rosenbaum—— By the way, did he mention to you his secretary—a Mr. Ivan Rosenbaum—the fellow who seems to be the murderer?"

"Yes, he spoke of him very warmly. He said he had picked him up in Russia only a little while ago. A wonderful man, he called him, for getting round people, and a marvellous worker. I remember he said the Russians were the most intelligent people on earth except the Jews—and his secretary had the advantage of being both."

"Rosenbaum was not with him when he called on you, I suppose?"

"No. Mr. Radlett came alone. But he arranged to send his secretary round to-day with a number of important papers he wanted me to take care of."

"Then Radlett left no documents with you except the concession?"

"I beg your pardon, several. He left his will."

"His will?"

"Yes. The will was made in Russia some years ago—while he was in prison, he said—and duly witnessed by two of his fellow-prisoners. He handed it over to me with the concession, asking me whether it was in order. I said it was informal, but apparently in order—only there was the difficulty of producing the witnesses in case of need. 'I should say there was,' he said, 'they're both dead. What had I better do about it?' I suggested that I should draw him out a new will in proper form. He agreed; but then he said, 'Look here, Franklin, my life's in danger. What happens if I die before I've signed the new will?' I said I would have it ready to-day, but he wasn't satisfied with that. He added a footnote to the old will accepting it, as from yesterday, as his last will and testament, and signed it again in the presence of two of my clerks. He said that would let him sleep easy till the new will was ready. I asked him whether he wanted any changes made, and he said I might as well delete the legacy to his daughter, but the rest held good. I was intending to make the new draft to-day."

"Can you tell me the purport of the will?"

"Yes. He had written that his fortune in America now in the hands of trustees amounted to about thirty million dollars, to the best of his belief. The will went on to say that he had already provided fully for his wife at the time of their parting, and that this money —ten million dollars—came to his daughter on his wife's death. 'It's come to her already,' he told me yesterday, 'my wife died two years ago.' To his daughter, Irene Philippa Radlett, the will left fifty thousand dollars in trust, the interest to be used on her behalf by the trustees, and the principal to be hers at

twenty-one or marriage—the earlier date. This legacy he instructed me to strike out. 'She won't need it,' he said, 'now that she has her mother's money.' The whole residue of his great fortune he left to 'my friend and partner, John Pasquett, in memory of our many adventures together, and in the hope he will have better luck with it than I.' There were no other legacies, save honoraria to the trustees."

Wilson nodded reflectively. "Practically, Pasquett gets everything," he said. "I understand he is due to arrive here in a week or so. Did Radlett say anything of him?"

"Yes. He spoke of him in terms of the warmest affection. He said Pasquett was the one real friend he had. They had spent, he told me, many years together."

"We are very anxious to get into touch with Mr. Pasquett. Do you know where he is?"

Franklin seemed to Wilson to hesitate oddly before he answered in the negative. "Did not Radlett tell you?" Wilson added.

"No. He only said he would be arriving in England shortly, and would be staying with him at Sugden's Hotel."

"Of course, if you hear from Pasquett or get to know where he is, you will let us know at once."

"Certainly. Lord Ealing may have his address." Again as Franklin said this, something in the way he said it made Wilson suspicious. Yet the remark seemed innocent enough.

"Lord Ealing," Wilson answered, "has only an address at Reval. We are trying there, of course. Now, Mr. Franklin, is there anything else you can tell us?"

"Yes. The paper on which the will was written contained on the other side a further document. It was addressed to his lawyer in New York, and instructed him, if at any time he failed to hear from him for any consecutive period of two years, to put the terms of the will at once into execution as a deed of gift, without waiting for leave to presume death from the courts. He said he had meant this to cover the contingency of his death in prison in Siberia. This document further gave John Pasquett, whose signature was appended to it, full power to sign all or any documents on his behalf, and to make any investments or assignments in his name at any time. This last provision was added at Reval about six months ago, in order, he said, to provide for the working of the concession by either partner in the absence of the other. He again signed both these documents yesterday in the presence of myself and one of my clerks."

"Then Pasquett can at once get control of Radlett's fortune, and will become absolute owner of it in two years' time, or on proof of Radlett's death?"

"That is so. There is no doubt about the validity of the documents, although they are not in proper legal form."

"Have you the paper there?"

The lawyer handed it over. "I think I am acting on Mr. Radlett's wishes in placing this in your hands. I have kept a copy, of course."

"You have no other papers?"

"None of importance. I am somewhat anxious, as I am the guardian of Mr. Radlett's interests, about the safety of the other papers he was to let me have to-day. Were they found at his hotel?"

"A number of papers—yes. Of course I cannot say

whether any are missing. Now, about Rosenbaum. Have you any idea where he was going this morning?"

"He was to have come to my office to-day, as I told you."

"Yes; but it is clear that Radlett arranged for him to go off somewhere this morning by train. He booked a taxi for him overnight, and Rosenbaum left at seven, and drove to Victoria Station. Where was he supposed to be going?"

"I have no idea. Mr. Radlett mentioned no such journey."

"I see. It was not likely you would be able to tell me. I think that is all, unless you have any further point."

But Franklin apparently had no more to tell. A few minutes later he took leave of Wilson. Taking a taxi outside, he drove straight to the offices of the Anglo-Asiatic Corporation. There was something he particularly desired to say to his best client, Lord Ealing.

. . . . . .

Superintendent Wilson was left wondering. "Now why," he said to himself, "did that fellow give me the impression of having something up his sleeve? Was it just imagination? Or what the devil could he have wanted to hide? And Lord Ealing somehow gave me just the same impression. The case seems plain enough, unless there's something further behind it. I must find out more about this fellow Pasquett. Though it looks as if Rosenbaum did it, beyond a doubt."

CHAPTER VII

IN WHICH SUPERINTENDENT WILSON MAKES AN ALARMING SUGGESTION, AND A TAXI-MAN GIVES HIS VIEWS ON PROGRESS

Wilson and Blaikie lunched together, and compared notes. Blaikie told his chief what he had found out at the hotel, and his chief told him about Mr. Franklin's visit, not mentioning, however, his suspicion that the lawyer had kept something back. "Well, where do we stand now?" Wilson asked.

"The puzzle in this case, sir, is not finding out who the criminal is, but catching him."

"So you're sure Rosenbaum did it?"

"Why, sir, isn't it obvious?"

"I suppose it is. If so, well and good. He ought to be easy enough to catch. But there's many a slip."

What the Superintendent said was true enough. There ought not to be much difficulty in catching Rosenbaum. He had only a few hours' start: he had gone off in a taxi, the driver of which could probably be found with a little trouble. He was an alien, of noticeable appearance, and with a strong foreign accent —an easy man to look out for, one almost certain to be stopped at any port if he attempted to leave the country, one who would find it hard to lie hid for long if he stayed in England.

Of course, Rosenbaum might not be his real name, and, even if it was, he would certainly have discarded it after the crime. He would also very likely try to

disguise himself. But his real appearance was known; for he could hardly have been wearing a disguise while he was in Radlett's company.

It seemed safe enough to look for a man of Rosenbaum's known appearance, as described by the servants at the hotel, subject, of course, to such disguise as he might have been able to assume since the murder. If he had really driven to Victoria Station, so peculiar a traveller would certainly have been noticed there, at seven o'clock in the morning, when the station was fairly empty. Even if he had changed his destination, they would find out from the driver where he had gone, and the tracing of a foreigner with so heavy a trunk ought to be practicable enough, whatever shifts he might try. Embarrassed by his heavy burden, Rosenbaum could hardly escape the scrutiny of railway porters, or of any one to whom he applied for help. And he certainly could not carry the trunk about himself. No, even if the process took time, it ought to be possible to track him down in the end.

His past movements, too, could be followed up, as far as it seemed necessary, in conjunction with Hugh Radlett's. They had arrived the day before, presumably by boat from the Continent. They could probably be traced, if it was worth while; but since they had arrived, it did not seem to matter much how or whence they had come. Then, inquiries could be pushed at Reval, through the Esthonian police, and this might bring to light further particulars about Rosenbaum, and shed light on the conspiracy of which Radlett was the victim.

The origin of the murder, both the police officers agreed, was probably to be sought in Russia. This presented a difficulty. As the Soviet Government was

not recognised, there were no relations between the British and the Russian police, and no help was to be expected from the latter. Some information might perhaps be got through the British Trade Commissioner at Moscow—but probably not much. Still, this scarcely seemed to matter; for, however Radlett's affairs in Russia might be mixed up with the case, the murder could be proved apart from them, and, even if Rosenbaum tried to make tracks for Russia, he would have great difficulty in getting there. If he were caught in England, his Russian record would scarcely be needed to convince a British jury of his guilt. The evidence against him seemed strong already: it would be beyond the reach of doubt if he could be caught with the body still in his possession.

But what did he want with the body? Why on earth had he taken it away? This was the point that kept worrying both the detectives as they sat discussing the case. Even if Rosenbaum had originally meant to go off with the body as part of a plan for removing all traces of the crime, would he not have left it behind when he found that this plan was not feasible? True, he had told the men to call for his luggage. But he could easily have explained that he had decided to leave it behind, after all. Or he could have packed a trunk full of clothes. No suspicion could possibly have been aroused by doing so. And his chances of getting away safely would have been vastly increased. Surely he could not want Radlett's dead body for some sinister purpose. Of what conceivable use would it be to him? It would be only a colossal embarrassment.

Wilson said little while Blaikie put these difficulties to him. Then he asked a question. "You're sure, are you, that Radlett's dead body *was* in the trunk?"

"Why, sir, how else could it have been got out of the hotel?"

"As for that, Inspector, I'm asking you. Could any one have entered or left the hotel during the night without being seen?"

"Quite impossible, I think. There are only two entrances. The back way was locked, bolted, and barred, and the key safe in the manager's room. And there was a watchman who would certainly have noticed. And the locks had not been tampered with. Of that I'm sure. The night porter was on duty at the front door all night. He says no one, except residents in the hotel, came in, and no one at all went out till he went off duty at seven o'clock. He seems a thoroughly reliable man."

"I see. Residents above suspicion?"

"Quite, I think." Blaikie handed over the list compiled by the hotel manager.

"Hm. Sugden's does attract the right people," said Wilson. "Nothing doing there, Inspector. That means it was a one-man job, on the inside at any rate."

"And it means the body was removed in the trunk."

"One moment, Inspector. It means that Radlett, since he has vanished and did not go out any other way, was removed in the trunk."

"Yes, sir. That's what I said."

"No, Blaikie. You said 'the body.' Are you sure Radlett was dead when he was removed?"

Blaikie gave a gasp of astonishment. "Why, sir, all that blood—— And Culpepper seemed quite certain."

"A man can bleed a lot without being dead, Inspector. That Culpepper thought he was dead proves nothing. An unconscious man looks very like a dead

one. And there may be uses for a live body where there would be none for a corpse."

"You mean, sir," said Blaikie excitedly, "this fellow Rosenbaum carried off Radlett alive, and is holding him to ransom, or something of the sort."

"No, Blaikie, I don't mean anything so dogmatic. I only say that, if Radlett was carried off in that trunk, there's not much more reason for supposing he was carried off dead than alive. Of course, if he was alive he was certainly wounded—and very likely drugged into the bargain. Rosenbaum had drugs with him. He drugged Culpepper. He may have drugged Radlett, too."

The Inspector caught enthusiastically at the idea. "Yes, I see. Rosenbaum, you mean, searched everywhere for the papers he wanted. He didn't find them, because they were safe at Mr. Franklin's office. So he attacked Radlett and wounded him in the struggle, his object being to frighten him into surrendering the papers. Failing in this, he drugged him and carried him off, meaning to threaten him at leisure into giving them up, and perhaps paying a big sum as ransom. Yes, sir, that must be right. It's the only possible explanation of Rosenbaum's carrying off the body."

"Don't jump to conclusions, Blaikie. It's one explanation, but it isn't the only one. He may simply have meant to cover up the traces, and been taken by surprise by the men who came in to fetch the trunk sooner than he expected."

"I don't think so, sir. I'm sure that other idea of yours is right. Radlett's being alive would make sense of the whole thing."

"I think, Blaikie, you underestimate the difficulty of keeping a living man prisoner here in London."

"Of course, sir, he had accomplices. One of these Bolshevik dens—the enemy in our midst, sir. We must call in the Special Branch."

"My dear Blaikie, don't talk like an article in the *Daily Express*. I'm not much of a believer in Bolshevik dens. Most of these fellows are a harmless lot of fanatics."

"But Sir Basil always used to say——"

"Oh, yes, I know all about that." Wilson's little differences with Sir Basil had been notorious, and the quoting of Sir Basil as an authority caused him to react at once. "No, Inspector. Most likely Radlett was dead, and Rosenbaum's plan was to remove all traces of the crime. Then he just hadn't time to do it."

"Surely he would have allowed time."

"It's not easy to plan out a murder as accurately as that. There was the struggle, you remember. Probably he counted on killing or silencing Radlett right off."

"But, if he hadn't time, he would have left the trunk behind."

"Unless he got flurried, or feared that a change of plan might arouse suspicion. Or unless he did want the dead body for some reason we have yet to discover."

"Still, sir, may I follow up that idea of yours? I mean about Radlett being alive."

"Certainly, Blaikie. We can't afford to miss any chances. And it all comes back to tracing Mr. Rosenbaum and his precious trunk. Do exactly what you think best—even to calling in the Special Branch, if you think that will help."

"Well, sir, it might help. They are supposed to know all the Bolshevik haunts in London."

"Yes," said Wilson dryly. "I remember they used to discover at least a couple of great revolutionary plots a week, before Sir Basil went."

"These Bolsheviks are dangerous fellows, sir."

"My dear Blaikie, if you had seen as much of the Special Branch as I have, you'd be more sceptical about Bolshevik plots."

Wilson and Blaikie returned to the Yard together, and found that, in their absence, the taxi-driver who had driven Rosenbaum to Victoria Station had arrived, and was now in waiting. "Send him up," said Wilson, and a few minutes later the two officers met him in the Superintendent's room. The driver was a small, wizened old man, looking somehow ridiculously out of place in his taxi-driver's uniform. You realised why, when you heard him speak. Then you knew that he was an old horse-cab driver, driven to a change of occupation by the changing times, but permanently resentful that the times should change. He glanced, with small, suspicious eyes, at the two police-officers, obviously ill at ease.

"Well," he said, "I'm here. Boss said I was to come round at once, and here I am. What yer want? Eh?"

"Sit down, will you, Mr.——"

"Brown, sir—John Brown. That's me," said the driver defiantly.

"Sit down, Mr. Brown. All we want is a little information about a man you picked up at Sugden's Hotel in St. James's Square this morning."

"Oh, 'im. Foreign bloke. 'Bout seven. Victoria Station, Brighton line. 'Eavy trunk. What's 'e done?"

"You drove him to Victoria, Brighton line, you say. What happened there?"

"'E gets down, and yowls out for a porter to kem

and take 'is trunk. So a porter comes, and I says to 'im, 'You mind out, matey. This 'ere trunk ain't no air-balloon,' I says. 'She'd sink the *Lusitania,*' I sez. 'And she'll sink you, if yer tries to get 'er off of 'ere all on yer lonesome.' But the porter, 'e 'ad no sense. 'E pulls at 'er, and 'e pulls, and the gent by-and-by comes and 'elps 'im, and they gets 'er on a truck and off they goes. So I 'ollers after 'im, ' 'I, mister, what about poor little me?' and 'e comes back and pays me 'andsome like, and off 'e goes after 'is blasted trunk. I 'eard 'im tell the chap to take 'er to the cloak-room—luggage office, 'e called it."

"And that was the last you saw of him?"

"No, mister, as it 'appens it weren't the last I saw of 'im. I pulls off into the rank jest outside the South Eastern, 'angin' on for another fare. And a few minutes later I sees that identical trunk bein' brought outer the station by another porter. The porter 'e 'ailed a taxi in front of me, and 'e and the driver packed the trunk on. Then up comes that furrin' gent and in 'e 'ops, and away they goes. So I sez to meself, 'what's 'e want drivin' off like that?' I sez. But anyways that's 'ow it 'appened."

"Do you know the number of the second cab, or who drove it?"

"No, mister, I don't, 'cep' that it was one of these new-fangled chaps what was born and bred, so to speak, on these blinkin' buses. Mechanic, 'ed call 'isself, and think 'isself blasted smart. Not one of the old 'orse brigade, same as me. See?"

"You didn't notice the number or know the man?"

"Ain't I sayin' I didn't? 'E weren't my sort. But I notice the furrin' gent, same as you would, 'cause of 'is 'air and 'is fool fussin' round."

"Fussing? How?"

"'E kept telling them porters to be careful. Said 'is trunk was chock full of valuable objects, as might break, and danced round 'em like mad while they was a-liftin' of it for fear it'd come open. Say, mister, what was it? Stolen jools, eh?"

"To the best of our belief, Mr. Brown, it was a body."

"'Oly Moses. Who'd a thought it of 'im? 'E looked a 'armless gent—an' 'e paid all right. 'Taint murder, is it, mister?"

"It may be murder, Mr. Brown. We may need you again. Your address—your home address. Thank you. And now we'll have a look at your taxi. Nothing left in it, I suppose, after our gentleman got in or later in the day?"

"Not so much as 'd buy an honest man 'arf a pint, mister. Some folks 'as all the luck, and they ain't yours truly, 'swelp me Gawd," said the driver, his suspicions revived by this question.

"All right, Mr. Brown. We'll have a look all the same." And they went down together to the waiting taxi, and thoroughly examined it, with no result. Still, at least they had picked up Mr. Rosenbaum's trail. He had driven to Victoria, ostensibly to catch a train. Yet within a few minutes he had mounted his trunk on another taxi, and driven off somewhere else. Obviously fishy proceedings. The next step was to find taxi number two.

CHAPTER VIII

FEATURING THREE MEN OF BUSINESS, AND SHOWING THAT LAWYERS HAVE THEIR USES

After his interview with Superintendent Wilson at the Yard, Lord Ealing drove straight to the offices of the Anglo-Asiatic Corporation. Previously housed in dark and inconvenient, but extremely expensive, premises in Lombard Street, the Anglo-Asiatic had been one of the pioneers in the great trek of business houses from the City to the West End. Acquiring a magnificent site at the bottom of Kingsway, it had erected a palatial building, from which a huge electric sign flamed out at nights. A trifle on the flashy side, perhaps, like an overdressed adventurer parading too much jewellery, the offices of the Anglo-Asiatic at least left on the mind no doubt of that Corporation's estimate of its own importance. Lord Ealing, himself, when he thought of the great building, always had to suppress something of a shudder; it was certainly not beautiful, but he believed it to be an admirable advertisement. And it was actually cheaper than the dirty old place in Lombard Street to which he sometimes looked back with regret.

Lord Ealing was frowning as his sumptuous, smooth-gliding car bore him along the Strand. It was excessively annoying of that fellow Radlett to go and get himself killed at so inconvenient a time. They had conversed together so profitably the day before—a

conversation which Lord Ealing had by no means reported in its entirety to the police. And now the fellow's death had upset the entire arrangement. It might even mean that the whole concession would come to nothing; for Radlett's partner, John Pasquett, was a quite unknown quantity, and might wholly lack the resources necessary to put it through. This infernal murder might be his ruin, or at least the ruin of the Anglo-Asiatic Corporation.

The plain fact was that the Anglo-Asiatic was in a pretty bad mess. It had investments in India and China which were doing reasonably well. But it had burnt its fingers badly in Mesopotamia just after the war, and its holdings in Persia were none too flourishing. The most serious blow, however, had been the complete wiping out, for the time at least, of its revenue from Russia. Russia, especially Asiatic Russia, had always been before the war the Anglo-Asiatic's principal sphere of operations. The Anglo-Asiatic Corporation had been doing very well indeed in Russia. But the two Russian revolutions had simply swept its profits away, and made its capital, at least for the time, worthless. Its Russian properties had been confiscated: nothing was coming in for the big sum sunk in works of development. The Board of the Corporation had backed first Admiral Kolchak and then other counter-revolutionary leaders in return for new concessions and promises that its properties would be fully restored. But, in the event, these concessions and promises were not worth the paper they were written on. The Board had to admit that it had merely been throwing good money after bad. It had become seriously involved, and no amount of window-dressing or management of the Press had availed to

conceal the gravity of the position. The shares of the Anglo-Asiatic had slumped heavily.

Radlett's proposal of partnership in his new concession had seemed to hold out the prospect of a glorious recovery, for Lord Ealing thought he saw his way not only to make money—a lot of money if all went well—out of Radlett's concession, but also to use it as the means of getting back the Anglo-Asiatic's confiscated properties. He had had enough of "White Hopes." The Soviet Government seemed to be firmly established, and he saw that the only sensible course was to come to terms with it. Lord Ealing had political influence enough, even as a member of the Opposition Front Bench, to feel confident that, if he gave the lead, he could force the Government to recognise Russia fully. Moreover, the Government's tenure of power was by no means secure: he might himself before long be in office. He persuaded the Board of the Anglo-Asiatic to adopt his view, and to receive Radlett's proposals with favour. He had learnt by correspondence that Radlett was a keen business man—just how keen he had not realised till their meeting on the day preceding the crime. With Radlett's co-operation he had felt sure of securely re-establishing the fortunes of the Anglo-Asiatic.

But, apart from these hopes, which he shared with his co-directors, Lord Ealing had hopes of his own, which the talk of the previous day had encouraged, and the breakfast with Radlett had been designed to turn into certainty. Lord Ealing had meant to set the Anglo-Asiatic on its feet; but he had meant also, by a method strictly confidential between Radlett and himself, to make a tidy bit extra on his own. And Radlett, the day before, had fallen in with his scheme,

taking a mere hint at once, and entering wholeheartedly into the plan.

Encouraged by the prospects of the new concession, Lord Ealing's co-directors had begun, before Radlett's arrival, quietly buying Anglo-Asiatics at the low prices then ruling. Very jealously they had guarded the secret of the proposed deal while they were buying; they had refrained from any action that might raise the price of the shares until they had bought all they wanted at the bottom price. Inevitably, their buying had at length caused a rise, and then, very discreetly, they spread abroad rumours of the coming deal. The shares had already responded by rising ten points during the last three days.

Lord Ealing, as well as his co-directors, had been buying shares. But, curiously enough, he had given instructions to his broker on the previous afternoon, after his meeting with Radlett, to sell all his recent acquisitions, which, of course, he had bought in the name of a convenient solicitor. His fellow-directors had no idea that he was doing this, and they would have been greatly puzzled if they had known. But Lord Ealing had his reasons. He had made a good profit by his buying and selling already: he hoped for a very much greater profit from transactions yet to come.

And now, Hugh Radlett's sudden death had spoilt everything. It would be in all the papers within an hour, and his own presence on the scene of the crime would be quite enough to enable the City to put two and two together. Anglo-Asiatics would slump and slump again. Lord Ealing could see no bottom to their fall.

But, you say, if Lord Ealing was a seller, surely this

was what he expected. You are right, and wrong. In order to explain why he was upset, we must reveal the substance of his little deal with Hugh Radlett—of that part of it, we mean, which he refrained from reporting to the police. The rise of the shares was based on the rumour of the new concession. If that fell through, the shares would fall—lower than they had ever fallen before. And what Lord Ealing and Radlett had arranged on the previous day was precisely that this should happen. Radlett was to give out that his negotiations with the Anglo-Asiatic had broken down, and that the concession was off. Every one—even the Board of the Anglo-Asiatic, except, of course, Lord Ealing himself—was to believe that this was so. The shares were to be forced down again, till they could be bought for a mere song. Then Lord Ealing and Hugh Radlett, under convenient *aliases,* would buy all they could lay hands on. That done, Radlett would change his mind, the arrangement between him and the Anglo-Asiatic would go through without a hitch, and the shares would bound up to dizzy heights of speculation. It was a neat scheme, and Radlett had fallen in with it so readily that Lord Ealing half suspected he had thought of it previously for himself. The details were to have been arranged over breakfast that morning.

But, with Radlett dead, not only was the scheme frustrated, but the whole future of the Anglo-Asiatic was again in jeopardy. The shares would fall, but there was no assurance that they would recover. Lord Ealing, who still had a substantial holding, could see no bottom to their fall. It was even now probably too late to sell out the remainder of his holding at a profit. And that would be a complete throwing up of the sponge, for which Lord Ealing was not yet prepared.

Assurance had gone; but there was still hope. Slender hope, maybe, but hope all the same.

Radlett was dead, and Radlett's millions had been an essential part of the plan for re-establishing the Anglo-Asiatic's fortune. It was not merely a concession Lord Ealing wanted, but fresh capital enough to inspire thorough confidence. And heaven alone knew who were Radlett's heirs, or whether there would be any chance of interesting them in the concession.

Still, there remained a chance—how good a chance there was no means of judging—that the concession could still be carried through. Even if Radlett was dead, his partner, John Pasquett, remained, and might conceivably be able to put the deal through with their help. But had Radlett's partner any money? Pasquett was a dark horse—Lord Ealing knew virtually nothing about him—and, in any case, he was not due to arrive for a week, and no one seemed to have any idea where he was.

The devil of a tangle! And his co-directors, Sir James Vanzetti and Mr. Benjamin, were even now waiting for him at the office, where he was to report to them the results of his conversation with Hugh Radlett, or as much of it as he chose to report. Would news of the affair have reached them, or would he be the first to bring evil tidings? There was nothing yet on the newspaper placards.

Hugh Radlett had been so eminently desirable a partner and had fallen in so readily with Lord Ealing's scheme. Vanzetti had been over to America himself in order to find out all about him. They knew all about his disappearance eight years before, but they had found also that his vast fortune, securely invested in bonds and stocks of the best class, was for the most

part easily realisable. The Anglo-Asiatic needed badly a partner who could lay his hand speedily on a million or so without feeling the strain. Radlett had been the man. Oh, damn the fellow! Why hadn't he taken more care of himself? And heaven alone knew where his money would go now, or whether this Pasquett or any one else would be able to provide the capital necessary for developing the concession. Vanzetti had failed to find out anything about Pasquett in America. He appeared to be totally unknown in financial circles. Probably the fellow had no capital, and Lord Ealing did not relish the job of trying to raise all that would be needed through the Anglo-Asiatic. Even if he could get the money, on the strength of the concession, he knew he would have to pay through the nose for it. He cursed under his breath as his car drew up at the corner of Kingsway.

As he crossed the pavement, a newsboy came running past, shouting and armed with a staring placard.

"American Millionaire Murdered.
Gruesome Story."

So the tale was out.

Vanzetti and Benjamin would have got the news already over the tape, if they had troubled to look at it. He went straight to Benjamin's room, and found them together.

The three leaders of the Anglo-Asiatic made a curious contrast. As they met, three types of modern high finance came together, and clashed a little at the concussion. For Lord Ealing's polished affability did not conceal the fact that he regarded his colleagues as a pair of vulgar upstarts, and their manner to him never

quite escaped both the opposite extremes of aggressiveness and servility. Benjamin was smooth, and inclined to be servile: Vanzetti hid behind a tone of aggressive familiarity a sense of social inferiority of which Lord Ealing was well aware. Unlike their chairman, the vice-chairman and the managing director of the Anglo-Asiatic were both self-made men.

Benjamin's father, indeed, had been a tailor in Whitechapel, an immigrant from somewhere in Central Europe. The son had started as office boy in a financial house in the City and worked his way up by industry and an extraordinary talent for watching the markets. He had not speculated himself: he played as a rule for safety. But he had been the invaluable adviser of speculators, and had made the fortune of more than one of his early employers. Personally, he was a very small man, obviously Jewish and obviously foreign, with a quick, nervous manner and a tendency to gesticulate. His chief failing was a weakness for great men, whose acquaintance he sedulously cultivated. His greatest joy but one was to sit next to a great man at dinner—his greatest to tell his friends about it afterwards.

Benjamin was seated now at his desk, and opposite him, in front of the fireplace, stood the gross bulk of Sir James Vanzetti. Lord Ealing was a tall man: Benjamin looked very small beside him. But Vanzetti dwarfed them both. He was not fat: he was built on a colossal scale—a great, ugly head set on a huge, shapeless body, a broad, flat face that set one thinking of Mongolia, small, pig-like eyes ceaselessly roving from thing to thing, a mass of dark, untidy hair and a great drooping, black moustache—with stains of food

and drink on his ample waistcoat, made the more prominent by his massive gold watch chain.

Lord Ealing looked at his two colleagues, and a feeling of distaste came over him. He brushed an imaginary speck from his well-cut morning coat, and added a shade to the exquisite politeness of his manner. He felt his patrician beauty and grace of movement by the side of these unsightly men of business. He drawled at them with his most exasperating Balliol accent, heard only when he was more than usually conscious of his own superiority.

"So sorry if I've kept you waiting. You have heard nothing, I suppose?"

Lord Ealing had known from his first glance at the two men that they had heard nothing. There was no special anxiety in their faces. Vanzetti had just been holding forth to Benjamin, as usual, and Benjamin had been obsequiously listening, and keeping his private observations to himself.

"What should we have heard? We were waiting for you," said Vanzetti. He had a loud, unpleasant, grating voice. It jarred on Lord Ealing.

"Oh, I thought you might have heard of Radlett's murder. It's on the placards," said Lord Ealing, as if he were mentioning an event of no particular importance.

"What?" roared Vanzetti. "What's that you say? Radlett's murder?"

"My dear Vanzetti, that's what I said. There is no need to shout."

"My God!" Vanzetti sat down heavily in a chair, and stared at the bringer of evil tidings.

"I beg your pardon, my lord," put in Mr. Benjamin. "We know nothing. Could you tell us——" He had

gone dead white; his pince-nez fell off and clattered on to the table.

Lord Ealing, still keeping up his air of unconcern, told them what had happened at the hotel, and of his visit to Scotland Yard. The two men stared at him, saying not a word till he had done. Only Mr. Benjamin recovered his glasses, and Vanzetti, after a minute, resumed his place before the fire.

"My God!" he said again. "This means ruin, Ealing. You take it damned calmly."

"Oh," said Lord Ealing, "do you think that? Of course, it is serious."

"I should jolly well think it was serious. We've put it about we were in with this man Radlett. Anglo-Asiatics won't be worth a brass farthing to-morrow. You mark my words."

"My dear Vanzetti, I always mark your words. You mark them for me. But there is this fellow Pasquett to be considered. We may—pull it off yet."

"Mr. Pasquett ought to be found at once, my lord," said Benjamin. "We must act quickly."

"And how the devil are we to act," shouted Vanzetti, "if we don't know where the fellow is—or whether he's got the cash to put it through? Upon my word, Ealing, this is too much. How often have I told you the Government ought to stamp out these damned Bolsheviks?"

"Oh, quite often," said Lord Ealing. "But, unfortunately, I'm not in power. I quite agree with you about the Government."

"Damn the Government. When it comes to a man like Radlett being murdered by one of these damned devils—in a place like Sugden's—what's the country coming to? These Labour men——"

"Aren't we getting a little off the point, my dear Vanzetti? You were saying, Benjamin, that we ought to find Pasquett? Will you tell me how?"

Benjamin held up his hands with a gesture of despair.

"What I say is, something must be done at once," said Vanzetti.

"Ah, yes, but what? What do you say, Benjamin?"

"I was thinking, my lord."

"You'll have all the time you need for thinking, my lad, if this deal falls through. Where'll the Anglo-Asiatic be in a week's time? Eh?" Vanzetti turned his back on them, and kicked savagely at the fire.

"Let us keep cool," said Lord Ealing. "Benjamin is quite right to think it out."

"You find this chap, Pasquett—and the cash, and I'll keep cool enough. But probably the fellow hasn't a cent. And we can't raise it. We're all in now, as it is."

"Well, Benjamin?"

"I think, my lord, I had better see a few people quietly at once, and assure them that Radlett's death will make no difference. It may stave off a collapse for a few days, till we can get in touch with Pasquett."

"What about the financial papers?"

"Of course, my lord. I will see what can be done with them. I may use your name?"

Lord Ealing laughed. "I suppose so. Between ourselves, the position is a little—awkward."

"I will see about it at once." And little Mr. Benjamin trotted off to put matters in train, leaving the other two together.

"Decent police on the job?" asked Vanzetti.

"Blaikie, the Inspector who came to the hotel, is just the ordinary plodding type, I think. But Wilson,

at the Yard, is good. A very able man. He did well when I was at the Home Office."

"What about spending a bit to make it worth his while? To find Pasquett, I mean."

"Not the slightest use. Wilson is quite above taking money. It would only make him suspicious to offer it. I have asked him to do what he can, and let me know at once if he gets into touch with Pasquett."

"Any use putting on private men of our own?"

"I think not. The police have by far the best chance of finding him. And he is expected here in a week, in any case."

"Good Lord! A week!"

"Patience, my dear fellow. We will wire to him at Reval, of course. But I expect he has left there. Our task is to be quietly confident till he comes. We must tell all the right people that the affair is—coming off. With a little effort, I do not see why we should not keep the shares from going down—for a week or so."

"I see your lay. You're holding on, then?"

"Above all, my dear Vanzetti, there must be no selling—by us. Personally, I shall go on buying, a little, and letting it be known. You understand that? No selling!"

Vanzetti mopped his brow. "I suppose you're right, Ealing. But it'll be the hell of a strain. I think I'll go round to the club, and start talkin'. I'll feel better, doin' something."

Lord Ealing was left alone. His colleagues were really rather impossible people, especially Vanzetti. But so useful. He sighed. Invaluable little chap, Benjamin.

Lord Ealing's first action, when he found himself alone, was to telephone to Mr. Franklin's office. But

the lawyer was out, and his clerk did not know when he would return. He had gone out with a man—a detective—who had called for him on urgent business. Lord Ealing left a message that Franklin must ring up without fail, immediately upon his return. Then he spent a bad three-quarters of an hour in his own room, vainly endeavouring to concentrate his mind on the matters of business which required his attention. His secretary, called in to receive instructions, found him in a vile temper, and, having seen a newspaper, surmised the cause.

No telephone message came from Franklin, but at last his secretary came in to say that the lawyer had called personally, and desired to see him on an urgent matter. He was at once shown in.

"Thank the Lord you're here at last," said Lord Ealing. "Have you sold those shares?"

"I gave orders to the brokers yesterday, my lord. They were sold the first thing this morning, in good time. At twelve more than we gave for them."

Lord Ealing heaved a sigh of relief. "That's one thing off my mind," he said. "You have heard of this bad business about Radlett?" he added.

Franklin replied that he had heard nothing of the murder till, on arriving at his office, he had found a man from Scotland Yard waiting for him. The man had told him briefly what had happened, and had insisted that he should go with him at once to the Yard and see Superintendent Wilson. "I had to go," Franklin added. "I stayed only to collect a few vital papers. I've just come from Wilson now. Of course you know I saw Mr. Radlett yesterday afternoon—after his visit to you."

"He told me he was on his way to see you."

"I would naturally very much rather have seen you, my lord, before going to Scotland Yard. But the man who came for me really left me no alternative. And, I think, no harm has been done. I said nothing that would be—better unsaid."

"That is good. You say you took some important papers with you?"

"Yes, at Mr. Radlett's orders. He said, if anything happened to him, I was to take it at once to Scotland Yard."

"It?"

"The concession. Mr. Radlett gave it into my keeping yesterday."

"Thank God, that's safe. I feared the murderer had found it."

"No, though he seems to have searched high and low for it."

Franklin then told Lord Ealing all that he had previously told Superintendent Wilson at the Yard. He even placed a copy of the will in Lord Ealing's hands. "I think my client would have wished it," he said. "Not strictly etiquette, of course. Quite between ourselves, you understand."

"Of course. So this man Pasquett inherits everything, and can touch the money now, under the power of attorney?"

"That is so, and, of course, I realise that makes it all the more important to get in touch with him at once."

"I have no address, except the post office at Reval."

"I understand Mr. Pasquett has left there."

"And you have no idea where he is?"

"Well"—Mr. Franklin's eyes rested meaningly, as he spoke, on Lord Ealing's—"as a matter of fact, I forgot to tell the Superintendent. But I believe Mr.

Radlett did say something about Pasquett being in Warsaw. But he gave me no precise address. I thought it might be convenient to tell you this. It quite slipped my mind, you understand, when I was talking to Wilson."

"I'm really very much obliged to you, Franklin. Of course, I won't forget it. Hm, Warsaw."

"I am always glad to be of any help, my lord."

"Now, Franklin, there's just one other point. What did Radlett say to you about my conversation with him yesterday afternoon?"

"All I told Wilson was that he informed me that he had seen you."

"Good. But he told you something further?"

"Well, my lord, he just hinted that there might be some temporary doubt about his going on with the proposed partnership with the Anglo-Asiatic, on account of its bad position in the City." Mr. Franklin looked meaningly at Lord Ealing.

"Look here, Franklin, I see you understand the position. What I am really anxious about is a letter I sent to Radlett by hand last night, giving further details about—the matter you refer to. Radlett did not send you that letter."

"No."

"He got it last night. Now, that letter must not come out. It would do infinite harm, and no one would be the better for it. I hope to God Radlett destroyed it; but, if he didn't—well, either it's among the papers in his room, and the police have got it—or else the murderer has got it. Do you see? It's devilish awkward."

Franklin stroked his chin, and looked at Lord Ealing.

"Yes, it would be," he said. "But I don't quite see where I come in."

"My dear fellow, you are Radlett's business adviser. Can't you get a look at those papers before the police go through them, and—you understand?"

Franklin stared at the ground for some minutes. "It's a poor chance at best," he said at last, "and risky."

"Of course, my dear fellow, you would be putting me under a very deep obligation."

"Yes. Well, my lord, if I can do anything I will. But I fear they will not let me have the papers."

"Try, Franklin. And meanwhile, I'll try to get in touch with Pasquett at Warsaw."

"Of course, he may have left there by now. But I was wondering, my lord, if you could make it convenient to send out a trustworthy man to get in touch with him if he is there. He could take a letter from me, about Mr. Radlett's will, as well as one from you."

"Not a bad idea, Franklin." Lord Ealing pondered for a moment. Then he rang the bell at his side. "Ask Mr. Wharton to come here," he said to the clerk who answered the summons.

CHAPTER IX

IN WHICH A CULTIVATED YOUNG MAN IS GIVEN AN AGREEABLE TASK

Arthur Wharton was Lord Ealing's nephew. Lady Mary Paull had married beneath her—a successful novelist who had somehow found his way into society. She had lived to repent her error, for the novelist did not reproduce in his private life the amiable characteristics of his heroes. Then she had died, when Arthur was eighteen. He was an only child. His father resided in Capri, and made him a small allowance; but they did not meet.

Arthur had been sent to Winchester, and thence had gone to Balliol. There he had worked, not too ostentatiously, and had also enjoyed himself in a quiet way. He carried off enough University distinctions, but not too many; took a first in "Greats," and got elected to a Fellowship at All Souls, that remarkable college where dons are plentiful, but there are no undergraduates, except a Bible Clerk or two to read the lessons. He had never meant to become a don, in the proper sense of the term. He did not want, he would say, to shut himself up in a box. But a Fellowship at All Souls involved no duties. It was a pleasant sinecure, conferring the use of an excellent residential club, and an unimpeachable introduction to the great men—from the Prime Minister and the Archbishop downwards—

who, as old Fellows, came down for an occasional week-end.

Arthur had a year of All Souls. By then its pleasures had begun to cloy. He became conscious of a desire to do things—a desire not to be satisfied by running inquisitively about Europe during vacations. He thought of his uncle, who, he knew, had a good opinion of him. One night, on impulse, stimulated perhaps by the dangerous properties of the All Souls old ale, he wrote to Lord Ealing and asked for a job in the Anglo-Asiatic. He half repented the next morning; but the letter had gone.

It was, indeed, rather odd behaviour on his part, for he had been a member—not very active—of the University Labour Club, and had professed vast scorn for business and the business man. But on the night when he wrote, that old ass, Wilbertson, had really fed him up. Wilbertson, the All Souls bore, had discoursed on the benefits of the academic life, the superiority of pure thought over action, the contaminating influence on thought of all attempts to act. The philosophers, he had said, must not be kings: it would spoil their philosophy. Arthur had listened politely. Then he had gone upstairs, and written to Lord Ealing. He had felt all of a sudden the supreme futility of Oxford.

So here, a year later, we find him, fully established in the great offices of the Anglo-Asiatic in Kingsway. Not very contented indeed; for he has come to the conclusion that his uncle's business is quite as futile as Oxford, and a good deal more dangerous than old Wilbertson's maunderings. Still, it is sometimes amusing, and he rather likes seeing the thing from the inside. So he has kept his criticisms to himself, and worked hard to learn his job, doing efficiently whatever he is

told to do, and building up a sound reputation for keenness and ability. Little Mr. Benjamin perhaps has his doubts about him; for Mr. Benjamin is an acute observer. But Lord Ealing, with no cause to watch him closely, has been well satisfied so far, and sees in him a promising recruit to the select number of financiers who are also gentlemen. Lord Ealing is fond of his nephew, and of saying that he has inherited the family brains. His other nephews certainly have not, and, as Lord Ealing is a bachelor—well, Arthur will be wise to go on behaving, and to lock up in his own mind his unfavourable comments on the honour of modern business. Who knows but he may inherit something more than brains, if he minds his P's and Q's?

Lord Ealing introduced Arthur to Franklin and explained briefly what he wanted. Arthur might know—Arthur did—that the Anglo-Asiatic had a big deal in contemplation with an American named Hugh Radlett. But he might not have heard—Arthur had not—that Radlett had been murdered during the night by Bolsheviks at his hotel in London. This was on the eve of his signing the necessary agreement with the Anglo-Asiatic for a joint concession in Asiatic Russia. A sad business. Radlett, however, had a partner, one John Pasquett, and it was vital that he should come to London in order to carry through the deal. His whereabouts were not certainly known; but there was some reason to believe that he was in Warsaw. If so, it ought not to be difficult to find him. Even if he could not be found at one of the big hotels, either the American or the British Consulate would probably know if he was still in the city. It was so urgent that, as the Anglo-Asiatic had not an agent in Warsaw, Lord Ealing

wanted Arthur to go out at once, by the quickest possible route, and bring Pasquette back. He would give him a letter for Pasquett explaining the affair, and Mr. Franklin also wished, as Radlett's lawyer, to send Pasquett a letter. He must also impress on Pasquett the vital importance of saying nothing, and making no move in relation to the concession, until he had seen Lord Ealing. He *must* see him first, on his arrival.

Arthur asked what he should do if Pasquette was not at Warsaw. Lord Ealing said that, if he could find no trace of him, he should wire back to that effect at once and then come home. If Pasquette had been there, but had left, he should follow him, if it proved possible to get on his track. The main thing was to bring him to Paris quickly. There Lord Ealing would arrange to meet him, and talk the position over fully before he committed himself in any way.

Arthur Wharton at once accepted the commission. It promised to be a pleasant change from the routine of office work in Kingsway. He had formed a very good idea of the reasons for his uncle's anxiety. Though Lord Ealing said nothing to him of the Anglo-Asiatic's pressing troubles, he was well enough aware of them, and quite conscious of the effect likely to be produced in the share market by the news of Radlett's death. If the concession fell through, he quite realised that the Anglo-Asiatic would be in a tight corner, and his job not worth a month's purchase. Well, it did not matter much to him. He had enough to live on, in any case, and he could easily make a bit more by writing for the papers. But the consciousness of the threat to the Anglo-Asiatic's survival lent a spice of adventure to his mission, otherwise humdrum enough. After lunching with Lord Ealing at his club, he set off to make his

preparations for the journey. He was to come back to the office at four o'clock for his uncle's and Mr. Franklin's letters. Then—Warsaw—and what else? Who could say? A jaunt in an aeroplane at least was certain, and Arthur liked aeroplanes.

CHAPTER X

SHOWING WHY PEERS SHOULD WEAR GLOVES, AND HOW MILLIONAIRES ARE NOT ALWAYS FORTUNATE IN LOVE

The papers found in Hugh Radlett's rooms had been brought round to Scotland Yard during the morning, and submitted for expert examination to the finger-print department. The murderer, in his search for the documents he wanted, might have left traces on the papers, though he had left none on the objects Blaikie had already examined. After his interview with the taxi-driver who had picked up Radlett at Sugden's Hotel, the Inspector returned to his room, to find a very excited expert from the finger-print department awaiting him.

"I say, Blaikie," said that officer, as the Inspector entered, "what the devil does this mean?"

"What the devil does what mean?"

"Do you know whose finger prints are all over those papers you sent in this morning?"

"The murderer's, I hope," said Blaikie. "So there were finger prints, after all. Have you been able to identify them?"

"I should jolly well think we have," said the expert. Blaikie sensed the excitement in his voice. "Do you tell me they're the murderer's?"

"What do you suppose I wanted them for? Whose are they?"

"They are Lord Ealing's."

"Lord Ealing's?" said Blaikie, incredulously. "Don't talk nonsense."

"I tell you those papers contain a good dozen finger prints, mostly excellent impressions, which are unquestionably Lord Ealing's."

"Good God," said Blaikie, mopping his brow, "what on earth does it mean? But how do you come to have Lord Ealing's finger prints?" he added, with a renewed note of suspicion.

"Oh, that's easy. When he was Home Secretary, we showed him over the department, and he had his finger prints taken by way of illustrating how it is done. We filed them with the rest. We have lots of the nobs filed, I assure you."

"You are prepared to swear," said Blaikie, "that these prints are Lord Ealing's?"

"Absolutely. Though it'll be something new if you want us to prove that the late Home Secretary is a murderer. Don't seem to make sense. Eh, Blaikie?"

"No," said Blaikie, "of course Lord Ealing is not a murderer. It's absurd. But what puzzles me is how his finger prints got on to those papers. They can't be his."

"They are. We've all been into it, and we all agree. Naturally, we were a bit surprised when we looked up the reference."

"Surprised. I should think so. I can't make head or tail of it," said Blaikie. "I must tell the Superintendent at once. Or, look here, you'd better tell him. I'll get him to come here." Blaikie 'phoned through to Wilson's room, announcing a startling discovery, and within a minute the Superintendent came in. The man from the finger-print department repeated his statement. Wilson asked him a number of questions,

but he remained quite firm that there had been no mistake. Wilson turned to Blaikie.

"Now tell me," he said, "was Lord Ealing alone with those papers at any time this morning?"

Blaikie thought. "He was there before me," he said, "but I'm sure he wasn't alone before I arrived. Afterwards, yes; he was alone in the room when I came back after telephoning to you."

"That's it," said Wilson. "Lord Ealing's not the murderer. That's nonsense. But he did take the opportunity of your absence from the room to look over those papers. It seems as if he wanted to find something. What, I don't know, but that may explain why I felt he was keeping something back when he talked to me this morning." He turned to the expert. "Now, mind, not a word of this to any one. Keep the mouths of the chaps in your department shut. Do you understand?"

The man from the finger-print department received his instructions, and left the two detectives together.

"This is a most remarkable complication, Blaikie," said Wilson. "We must find out more about this."

"Lord Ealing, sir," said Blaikie, "I can't fancy him up to any hocus-pocus."

"Oh, but I can," said Wilson. "We shall need to walk warily, though. His lordship is not a man to be trifled with. I'll give this point my personal attention, Blaikie. You get on with examining those papers, and let me know. They may throw some light on what Lord Ealing was doing. Though, if he wanted one of them, he's very likely got it. Keep your mouth shut about this. It's not a thing to talk about. Of course, not a word to Lord Ealing."

Wilson went back to his room, and Blaikie turned to

the papers which the man from the finger-print department had brought to his room. With a sigh of perplexity, he settled down to examine them in detail. They were a very miscellaneous collection, for the most part business papers and memoranda, the majority of quite recent date, but some dating back as much as ten years, and belonging, therefore, to the period before Radlett's sudden disappearance from New York eight years before. The business papers formed the largest group; but, in addition, there were a number of private letters and documents, and a few old photographs.

Blaikie began by sorting the papers roughly into a number of piles—business notes and memoranda on one pile, private documents on another, photographs on a third. At this first sorting, he picked out four papers and laid them aside from the rest. One was a long, typewritten document, unheaded, but containing apparently a sort of autobiography, written by Radlett himself. The second seemed to be the manuscript original or part of the original of this document. These Blaikie put by for full study at a later stage. The third was a marriage certificate, recording Hugh Radlett's marriage, twelve years before, at a church in New York, to Philippa Franck Dolmetsch, daughter of Felix Franck Dolmetsch, banker, of New York City. The fourth was another certificate, recording the birth, forty-five years before, of Hugh, son of John Radlett, miner, in the Parish of Restington, Co. Durham.

"So that's why he called himself 'Restington,'" said Blaikie softly. "Thinking of the old place."

He noted the dates, and passed on to the pile of private letters. Among them was a bundle, tied together with a faded piece of ribbon. On the top was a loose sheet of paper, endorsed "From Mary Pole, H.R."

"I wonder who Mary Pole is—or was," said Blaikie to himself. "Not that it's likely to matter."

He read through the letters. The last had been written some twelve years before, four years before Radlett's disappearance from America. Most were simple little notes, about everyday matters, showing only a close friendship between Radlett and the writer. She addressed him as "Hugh," and signed herself "Mary." But the later letters were more interesting. Clearly, Radlett and Mary Pole had fallen in love and became engaged. There were lovers' letters, making appointments, relating experiences, or about nothing at all save Mary Pole's love for Hugh Radlett. Blaikie came to the last letter but one. Mary had been away in the country for her health. She wrote to tell her lover that the doctors had told her she was dying of consumption, and that there was no hope. It was only a matter of months. She had made up her mind not to see Hugh again, but to go home to her parents in Scotland, and die there. It would be best for them both, she felt, not to say good-bye. She loved him, but she could not marry him now.

The last letter showed that Hugh Radlett had at once hurried off, and compelled Mary Pole to see him. He had entreated her to marry him, but she had refused. He had written again, imploring her to spend her last days with him as his wife; and her last letter—a pitiful thing—told him that before he received it she would have gone, and that he must not follow her. She would leave him no address: it was better so. She wished simply to go out of his life. Her own would soon be ended.

Blaikie turned again to the certificate of Radlett's marriage. Two years after this parting he had married

another woman, and two years later again he had parted from his wife. A pathetic story; but neither here nor there in relation to Radlett's death. Blaikie put the letters aside, and turned to the rest of the papers before him.

The other private letters were few. One or two, apparently survivors of early manhood, were of a date before Radlett's disappearance. The rest were brief notes from his partner, John Pasquett, written in a style which showed close friendship, and of various dates, from nine years to only a few weeks back. They contained nothing of importance, dealing mostly with journeys and adventures in Russia. The later letters also referred again and again to the projected concession, and there were several mentions of the proposal to interest Lord Ealing and the Anglo-Asiatic in the scheme.

Blaikie turned next to the business papers. Some of these were also more than eight years old, and dealt with Radlett's business affairs in America. One gave apparently a list of his investments at the time of leaving America. Then there was a long letter from his lawyer in New York, dated only a few months back, giving an account of his stewardship of Radlett's fortune during his eight years' absence. This had apparently been written in reply to a letter of Radlett's, resuming contact with his affairs in New York after his long absence in Siberia. Clearly, from the letter, Radlett's affairs were in a most flourishing condition: his securities had appreciated under skilful management, and he was richer than ever at the time of his arrival in London.

The letter from the New York lawyer dealt also with more personal matters. It informed Radlett that his

daughter's education was proceeding satisfactorily, and that more than nine million dollars, the estate of his dead wife, were being held in trust for her, and a part of the income applied to her maintenance. The lawyer also asked for any instructions concerning the will which Radlett had left behind on his departure from America, or concerning the other deeds relating to the disposal of his property. Did these stand, or were there later instructions?

The Inspector made a note that the New York lawyer must be communicated with, and informed, if he did not already know, of the existence of the later will. He then turned to a large mass of papers dealing with the proposed concession on the Yenisei River. These included elaborate notes of the survey which Radlett and John Pasquett had undertaken, mostly in Pasquett's writing, as Blaikie found by a comparison with Pasquett's letters, which he had already examined. There were also plans, a few letters to Radlett from departments of the Soviet Government, written in French or German, and typewritten copies of some of Radlett's replies. There were also copies of Radlett's letters to Lord Ealing inviting the Anglo-Asiatic to become a partner in the concession, and the originals of Lord Ealing's answers. The Inspector, feeling that these documents were not really his business, examined them but briefly, and put them aside.

There now remained only the photographs and the two bundles of papers containing Radlett's autobiography. Most of the photographs were of scenes in Siberia, largely of the country covered by the concession, endorsed on the back with descriptions in Pasquett's writing. Three were portraits. One, a snapshot of a tall, broad, pleasant-faced man of forty

or so, was autographed in the corner, "H. R., with love from J. P." So this was Radlett's partner, whose coming was so eagerly awaited. "A good-looking fellow," thought the Inspector, "with a taking smile, and a merry look about the eyes." The second was of Radlett's father, who looked like a typical miner, sturdy and stooping, with keen peering eyes, and a tired, strong face. It was endorsed on the back: it had been taken over thirty years ago. The last photograph, autographed "Hugh from Mary," portrayed a girl, rather sad-faced, but beautiful, in the dress of a dozen years before. "So that's Mary Pole," thought the Inspector. "He kept her portrait, but not his wife's."

Radlett's autobiography, perhaps, would tell him more of these relics of the past, and, having finished his study of the smaller papers, Blaikie settled down to read it.

Comparing the two copies, he found that a couple of sheets at the end were wanting in the manuscript copy, which ended in the middle of a sentence. For the present, therefore, he set aside the frayed and discoloured sheets of manuscript and took up the bundle of typescript. It had been typed, he had satisfied himself, on the actual typewriter, an old German machine, found in Radlett's rooms, possibly by Radlett himself, possibly by the missing Rosenbaum, in his capacity of secretary to the millionaire.

But Blaikie had hardly begun to read when he was informed that Mr. Franklin would like to see him. He told the officer to send the lawyer up, and put the paper he had been reading down on his desk. A minute later Franklin came in, and greeted him warmly. Blaikie was surprised at his warmth, for they had only met

once before, and on that occasion they had not been friends. Franklin at once referred to the occasion.

"Well, Inspector," he said, "you did me down nicely the last time we met. What was it my man got? Five years, yes. But I bear no malice. Dear me, no. All in the day's work."

Blaikie was polite, and let him talk on for a minute or so. Then he inquired the lawyer's business.

"You are aware," said Franklin, "that I was Mr. Radlett's legal adviser. He placed all his affairs in my hands."

Blaikie said that he was aware of the fact. Franklin then, with what seemed to Blaikie an unnecessary display of tact, came to his point. He wanted permission to go through the papers found in Radlett's room, in order to see if he could tell whether any important documents were missing. Radlett had given him a list of the more important papers.

"If you give me the list," said Blaikie, "I will check it carefully with the papers."

Franklin's reply was to suggest that it would be best if he went through the papers himself.

Blaikie considered. He could see no objection to the proposal considered in itself. At least, he would have seen none, had he not been conscious of something suspicious in Franklin's manner, and had he not remembered that the lawyer had some connection with Lord Ealing. This, however, was quite enough to make him suspicious, after his experience narrated at the beginning of this chapter. He replied, cautiously, that he would have to ask Superintendent Wilson's permission.

"Is that necessary? Of course, it is as you think best. But surely, if I can be of help in that way . . ."

Blaikie reaffirmed that he must ask Wilson. He would have gone to the Superintendent's room to consult him, and Franklin actually suggested this. But it would have meant leaving Franklin alone with the papers. He took up the house 'phone, and told his chief that Mr. Franklin was there, and was asking to see Radlett's papers in order to check them for possible missing documents. He could tell from Wilson's voice that the information interested him. What the Superintendent actually told him was to let Franklin see the papers, but to keep a very watchful eye on him while he did so.

Blaikie told the lawyer that he might go through the papers, and Franklin at once began his examination. Watching him closely, Blaikie got a definite impression that he was looking for some particular document, for at most of the papers he barely glanced. And, when he had done, Blaikie was sure, from his anxious inquiry whether there were absolutely no more, that he had not found what he wanted.

Franklin, however, positively assured the Inspector that no paper of which Radlett had told him appeared to be missing. "Though that, of course," he added, "is no proof that nothing has been taken. There are many papers here of which I knew nothing."

Blaikie thanked the lawyer for his trouble, making only a mental note of the impression he had received. He drew from Franklin's visit the conclusion that Lord Ealing had not found what he wanted when he searched the papers at the hotel. But he was as puzzled as ever to guess what it could be. With assurances that he wished to be of all possible use, the Inspector returned to his interrupted reading of Radlett's story of his life.

CHAPTER XI

IN WHICH HUGH RADLETT TELLS HIS OWN STORY, AND THE READER LEARNS THAT EVEN POLICEMEN HAVE HEARTS

"I CANNOT explain," the document began, "why I am setting out to put on paper the story of my life. It is not a life pleasant to recollect. Probably I am writing it down because I have nothing else to do, and even the recollection of unhappy things is better than doing nothing. I have had happy times, of course—very happy times—but my life on the whole has been unhappy, from the first days I remember clearly to this day, which finds me rotting away in a Russian prison. The chances are that I shall die here. Disease takes a heavy toll of us prisoners. Still, Jack has escaped, and perhaps I shall escape, too, though they are far more vigilant now since this Government has got better organised.

"Here I am, forty-three years old, one of the richest men in the world, yet with hardly a rag to my back, and less power than the meanest of God's creatures in a civilised country. In this prison with me are more than a hundred fellow-creatures, rotting with disease, and far less able to stand privation than I am. I have lived hard: I take a lot of killing. I do what I can for them. I am prison doctor, prison chaplain, and a dozen other things all rolled into one. Every one brings me his troubles. It keeps me with something

to do, and that is good. But I am lonely now Jack is gone.

"I had better begin at the beginning. I was born forty-three years ago this very day—a queer birthday this. I have been watching over one of my fellow-prisoners most of it. He died an hour ago. My birthplace was a two-roomed miner's cottage in England, at Restington, in Durham County. It was a colliery house, owned by the colliery company, a miserable shack that ought to have been pulled down long before. It leaked horribly. The paper was always peeling off the walls, and the roof always wanted mending. The company used to have it patched up occasionally, when it got worse than usual; but it always broke out again in a fresh place. A rotten home. But there were plenty more like it. The colliery workings ran right under the house, and the subsidence had caused great cracks in the walls. I remember how those cracks used to open and shut and open again as the workings proceeded underneath.

"My father, John Radlett, was a collier, but we were very poor. Father had been too active in Union affairs, and the overseer always saw to it that he got one of the worst working places in the pit. There was no minimum wage then. The Unions weren't so strong as I suppose they have grown since. And father couldn't chuck up his job: no one else in the district would have employed him. He was a marked man, and he had an old mother and father to help support as well as us.

"There were five of us—father and mother, my brother and sister, and myself. My brother Edward was killed in a colliery accident when I was ten. I remember it well. The cage had fallen to the bottom of

the shaft. My mother took me to the pithead, where there was a crowd of men and women waiting for news. I was frightened, and ran away and hid in a shed. My mother found me and told me my brother was dead. After that, there were only four of us to feed.

"My sister Annie was the eldest—ten years older than I. I was very fond of her. But four years after Edward was killed she married a collier from South Wales. His name was Morgan. A few months later he went back to South Wales to look for work there, and took her with him. He had quarrelled somehow with father, and we lost touch with Annie altogether. I have never seen her since. I tried from New York, when I had made money, to find out where she was, but I could not trace her. Perhaps she is dead.

"I went to work at thirteen. I had some schooling first, of course, at a rotten hole of a school pretty nearly as bad as our house. It was draughty and leaky and horribly cold in the winter. I remember the schoolmaster—a little fellow with gray hair and a straggly beard, and tired, watery eyes. He was a very poor hand at keeping order: we did what we liked with him. He seemed to have lost heart and interest—and no wonder, after thirty years teaching in that dead-alive village, miles from anywhere, thirty years of torment from generations of little devils like me. He taught me little: I gave him no chance. I was glad to get away from school to the pit.

"I worked two years on the surface, helping the winding engineer, and learning a good bit about mine machinery. I never went underground there. I meant to be an engineer when I grew up. Then, when I was fifteen, mother died. Grandfather and grandmother had died a few months before, within a week of each

other. Father and mother had made all sorts of plans. We were getting better off, and having enough to eat. Then mother died, and father and I were left alone in the house. It was a dreary home after that. And, in a few months' time, came a strike.

"The men lost that strike. They had come out against the wish of the Union; for, though their case was good, trade was bad. Father was made chairman of the Strike Committee. When the men went back—starved out—there was no job for him. The fellows made a collection for him out of their first week's pay, but he said that he and I would starve by inches if we stayed. He was turned fifty then, but he made up his mind to leave England, and go to the States. Mother's death and the strike had sickened him of the old place.

"We were not quite friendless in America. There was an old friend of father's who had settled in Colorado years before, and done well. He had urged father before to come out and join him, but he would not leave the old people. But now there was nothing to keep him in England. So he wrote to Jim Merritt saying he would like to come over, and asked for the loan of the passage money. He got a letter back, enclosing more than enough, and offering us a warm welcome and the assurance of work at good pay. Father travelled steerage, and at last we got to Merritt's place. We found he had risen to be one of the richest men in Colorado. Father said he would never have dared to write if he had known how Merritt had risen in the world. He had a whole group of mines under his control, and a big house in one of the settlements where we stayed at first. He started father as under-manager to one of his pits, and I went to work with him as a sort of apprentice to learn the technical

side of the business. Merritt promised to give me a leg up if I shaped well.

"He was a queer chap, old Merritt. He had never married, and he lived all alone in a few rooms of his big house, with only one servant. He was very kind to us; but he was a devil with the men, and expected father to drive them without mercy. Father and he used to quarrel about it, and father was always threatening to throw up the job. But he stuck to it, because of me, I believe.

"The miners were mostly immigrants. There were some Irish and a few English and Welsh; but most of them were East Europeans, Slavs and that sort. Their conditions were pretty bad, and accidents were always happening. The blowing-up of a few now and then seemed to be taken as a matter of course. Old Merritt wouldn't have any Unions in his pits. He was always chasing off Union organisers. But by-and-by the Unions got in, and organised the men secretly. Then they struck. Merritt had a corps of gunmen, and tried to drive them back to work. Father stuck up for the men, and he and Merritt had a big quarrel. It came soon to something like civil war in the pit. The gunmen killed a couple of the miners' leaders, and the men in revenge rushed one of the shafts and wrecked it. Father was shot, trying to make peace between them and the gunmen. The men lost a good friend in him. It was a stranger from another pit who shot him.

"That was five years after we left England. I was twenty when I was left all alone. I was mad with old Merritt, and blamed him for father's death. He was really cut up about it, and offered to pay for a big funeral; but I wouldn't have it. The men buried father. Then old Merritt sent for me, and said he

wanted me to come and live with him, and be his heir. I told him to his face to keep his money, and said I would have nothing to do with him. He tried to argue with me, but I told him I looked on him as father's murderer.

"While I was at the pit I had picked up a pretty good knowledge of mine engineering, and I felt I could do something on my own. Father had saved a bit of money, and I could afford to look round. I went away to Mexico. After a time I got a job as manager to a big new pit there that was being developed by a syndicate in New York. By the time I was twenty-five I was managing a whole group of pits controlled by the syndicate, and doing very well. It was a rough job; but I had a fairly free hand, and made conditions better than they might have been. I thought I was settled there for good.

"Then, one day, I got an unexpected piece of news. Old Merritt had died in Colorado. I had not heard once from him since the quarrel after father's death. But he had made me his sole heir. He had no one belonging to him, and I suppose it was a sort of reparation. He had left me between four and five million dollars. I was doing well enough before that, but suddenly I found myself rich.

"Yet, in the long run, my money brought me no happiness. I threw up my job in Mexico, where I was happy enough, and came to New York. I was now a biggish mine owner on my own, and I came to terms with the syndicate I had been working for, and brought old Merritt's mines into the combine. A couple of years later I became chairman of the board.

"To cut a long story short, after that for a time I couldn't go wrong. I speculated, and my five million

dollars became ten, twenty—I believe it got to thirty in the end. Everything I touched went right. And yet I was not ambitious. When I had got all I wanted, I sold out of the syndicate, put my money into safe investments, and settled down to a life of leisure.

"That was after my marriage—the fatal mistake of my life. I was really in love with some one else all the time. Only she was ill—with consumption—the doctors said she was bound to die. She refused to marry me: she went away and left me. And then she did not die, after all: she got well. And when I found out, I was married to the wrong woman.

"She had gone away to Scotland, where her home was. I got word she was dead, but it wasn't true. I could not bear the loneliness after she had gone. And Philippa made me feel she could comfort me and sympathise with me. I used to talk to her about poor Mary. Philippa made up to me for my money: I knew that after we were married. She never cared a button for me. She wasn't one to care.

"Philippa's father had been chairman of the syndicate before me. His name was Dolmetsch: he had come from Posen when he was a boy. He speculated, and things went wrong with him. He cut his throat, leaving Philippa alone. Her mother was dead. Philippa was poor then, and I suppose I was a very eligible husband. We were married.

"We got on badly from the first: there was really nothing in common between us. And by-and-by an actor fellow came along. I found out about him and Philippa. That was after the child was born.

"I spoke to Philippa after I found out. She denied it, but I had made sure. I told her we could not go on

living together. I said I would settle ten million dollars on her, and give her a divorce. I let her divorce me—a beastly business. She had the child—poor kid!

"I felt then what a mess I had made of things. And I made up my mind what to do. As soon as the divorce was done with, I simply disappeared. I arranged everything with my lawyers—I knew I could trust them. All my money I put in the hands of trustees. They were to use the income—unless any of it were needed for the child's education—for charitable purposes until I turned up to claim it again. If I never did turn up, it was to be made into a permanent national trust when seven years had elapsed without their hearing from me. I only told one man, my lawyer, where I was going, and arranged to let him know from time to time where I was. Then I quietly dropped out. I was sick of everything. I wanted to get right away from America and think things out, and perhaps make a fresh start. I felt black all over: I hadn't the heart to go to Mary then, though I was free. And I've never had the heart to go, even now. Perhaps I shall yet, if I ever leave Siberia.

"I went up to Alaska first, and crossed over the Behring Straits into Asia. I went there simply because it seemed the easiest place to bury myself in. I wandered right over Asiatic Russia. I had plenty of adventures and a good share of privations. Some time I'll write them down, but not now.

"It was lonely. That was what I had meant it to be. But I was pining for companionship before six months were out. I kept wandering on from place to place, cursing Philippa—for I was still angry then—and wondering what on earth to do with the rest of my life.

"Then I met John Pasquett. That was in 1916, I suppose. The war had been going on a good bit more than a year then, but it hardly affected us out there. We got no war news—only rumours. I took no particular notice of them. All I saw was the old Russian government gradually breaking down under the strain as troops were withdrawn to Europe, and transport became more difficult. There was a stir, too, among the political exiles.

"It was a queer meeting of me and Jack Pasquett. I was feeling more than usually depressed, and I had gone off into a camp in the forest in the loneliest place I could find. It was about a hundred miles north-west of Chita. I had built myself a rough hut of logs, and was living there all alone. Jack just stumbled into my hut one night, dead beat. He had been travelling through the forest on foot, and had got lost. He saw my light from a distance, crawled up to my hut, and fainted.

"I got him round somehow, and the moment I heard him speak I knew what I had been wanting. He spoke English. I didn't recognise him then, though I found out later he had been under-manager of one of my own pits, but I just fell on his neck and cried. Literally, I mean. Then I nursed him up, and we soon became fast friends.

"French-Canadian by birth, I found he was. But he had left Canada young, and knocked about the world a lot. He had worked for old Merritt and then for me in Colorado before coming to Russia. Just before the war he had been in charge of a big German-owned mining concession on the Upper Yenisei, near Yeniseisk.

"Except himself, he told me, all the technical men

were Germans, and, when the war came, he was left to carry on the mines alone, with no settled help. For a time, he kept things going. But it got harder and harder. His men drifted away. He could not get money to pay them, though the government kept on making promises. Finally he had to own himself beaten. His money was all gone, and he saw starvation ahead. He asked the government to let him go, but they refused, and told him he must keep the mines at work. In the end, he simply ran away, and set out to reach America—on foot, mind you—right across Asia. He got conveyances here and there, but mostly he travelled on his own feet. He was on that journey when he stumbled into my hut.

"Jack and I settled down together, and stayed the winter out in that hut. It was during that time he first told me of his discovery. The gold mines were actively worked on the Upper Yenisei, but he said that, on one of his expeditions, he had found, lower down the river, what looked like the richest goldfield in the world—totally unknown to everybody, in an area inhabited only by a few ignorant peasants. He was an expert gold miner, and he talked as if he knew. Before long he was pressing me hard to go in with him, and try to work the thing. It needed a lot of capital and influence, and he had neither. He said that with my money we could easily bribe the government into giving us a favourable concession. I put him off by saying I didn't want to make any more money. But he had sized me up pretty well—we understood each other. So he changed his tune, and told me it would be a big exciting adventure. That caught me. What I wanted was something to do. On the first sign of spring we went off to have a look at his goldfield.

"It did not take long to convince me that he was right. There was fabulous wealth to be had for the asking. Apart from rich workable deposits, we suspected the whole bed of the river—a fair-sized tributary of the Yenisei—was rich in gold for forty miles at least. I had got thoroughly excited about it by this time, and my lethargy had quite worn off. We spent all that spring and summer prospecting and making elaborate charts and plans. We arranged, too, that, as he had discovered the place, that should be his contribution. I would put in the capital needed, and we should share equally in the proceeds. When the summer ended, we started off together for Petrograd in order to get in touch with civilisation, and begin working for that concession. I was to get in touch with my lawyer in New York, and arrange for a remittance. It was a year since he had heard from me.

"So much for our plans. We made for Yeniseisk, where Jack was known. That was in the autumn of 1917. From there I wrote off to New York, but I doubt if the letter ever got there. For at Yeniseisk we had our first taste of the revolution. The Czar, of course, had been overthrown in the spring, and Kerensky was nominally in power. But, while we were at Yeneseisk, came the second revolution. A local Soviet assumed power, and arrested us both on suspicion of being counter-revolutionary agents. They flung us into prison, and then, I think, they forgot all about us. At all events we stayed there two years, and had the doubtful honour of being imprisoned alternately by both sides—or rather, all the sides—during the Civil War. Some of them thought we were Czarist agents; some of them thought we were Bolsheviks. It was no use trying to explain.

"Finally, we managed to get away, and down to Turkestan. We were trying to get through to India or Persia, but this made the authorities think we were British agents, and they locked us up again in this place. I have had a year now of this. I feel I can't stand much more of it, since Jack has gone.

"Jack got away a month ago. We meant to escape together, and our plan seemed good enough. It only meant knocking down one guard and slipping away quickly in the darkness.

"We knocked him down all right, and started running. But the fellow made a grab at me as he went down, and refused to let go. He managed to cry out, too. I could easily have killed him, but I meant him no harm; and, besides, we should have had no change of getting away if they had started after us at once. So I shouted to Jack to run on alone, and I grabbed the guard by the windpipe and squeezed all the breath out of him. The other guards came running up and rescued him soon enough, but it gave Jack just start enough to get clear away.

"They guarded me more securely after that, and I haven't had a chance of escaping since.

"These Russians are not bad gaolers in their way, despite the filth. They let me write and do pretty much as I like within the four walls of the prison. They are only brutal when they are drunk, and now there is hardly any drink to be had. The worst is the dirt and the vermin, and the loneliness, and watching my fellow-prisoners die. It seems a useless sort of a life, mine. And yet I am useful here in a way. If only——"

At this point came a break in Radlett's story. The document went on in a different style.

"It is a year and more," the document resumed, "since I wrote down the story of my life. What a lot has happened during that year! I have escaped, thanks to Jack's help, and he and I have been six months in Europe. He came back to save me, good friend that he is. He bribed the warders, and got a letter in to me at the prison. We got safely away at last. A hard journey we had of it, making our way down to India, but at last we reached civilisation again, and I managed to get hold of my papers that I had left behind in Turkestan. Since then, Jack and I have thought of nothing but the concession. I have been to Moscow, and fixed things up with the authorities there, and I have started negotiations now with the biggest syndicate in England for working the thing jointly with them. Lord Ealing's influence will be invaluable: he has a political pull as well as a command of big resources. This affair of ours is going to be big—bigger even than anything I ever tackled in America. Russia is a country of marvellous resources, and Jack and I between us have the brains and the money to make the thing go. Oh, it's good to be free and back in harness. I've been rusting too long. Some day perhaps I'll write up these notes into a full story of my life. Jack says I ought to do it. But I'm too busy now. There's all this work about the concession to be done. And, if I were to die—though I don't feel a bit like dying—Jack would carry the thing on. All my money goes to him, of course. He's the one real friend I've had in my life. I'm a different man since I got to know him, and different again since I got back into harness. I'm enjoying myself like a boy, and so is Jack."

There Hugh Radlett's story ended. Blaikie put it

down. "He had a bad time, poor chap," he said to himself. "But he seems to have cheered up wonderfully. Writes like a different man in that last bit. I wonder what that fellow Pasquett's like. I suppose he'll be turning up soon. Sounds an interesting chap. And Radlett was mighty fond of him. Like David and Jonathan," thought the Inspector. "Quite touching." Blaikie was a bit of a sentimentalist himself.

CHAPTER XII

IN WHICH ARTHUR WHARTON FINDS A TRAVELLING COMPANION, BUT NOTHING ELSE OF IMPORTANCE

Arthur Wharton was seldom slow in putting two and two together, and the sum in simple arithmetic which Lord Ealing had set him presented no difficulties. He had read about the Radlett case in the evening papers: his uncle had told him that John Pasquett was Radlett's partner, and he was fully aware that the Anglo-Asiatic was trusting for the revival of its fortunes to a big Russian deal with Radlett.

Apparently, Radlett's murder had upset Lord Ealing's calculations, and he had very special reasons for desiring that Pasquett should be found at once. It needed little perspicacity to see that the police would also want to find Pasquett, in case he could throw any light on the crime, or to conclude from Lord Ealing's way of proceeding that he wanted to be beforehand with the police in seeing Radlett's partner. Evidently, this was the purpose of his mission, and it seemed best not to inquire too closely into his uncle's motives in trying to steal a march on the police. The effect was to give him what would probably be an enjoyable trip. He had often wanted to visit Poland, and had never done so. And his mission, he told himself, was quite innocent. He had only to deliver his letters and come back with Pasquett at once.

Arthur saw Lord Ealing again that afternoon before

leaving on the boat train for Paris, where he was to pick up the air route to Warsaw. His uncle stressed again the strictly confidential nature of his mission, and gave him a packet of letters. "Mr. Franklin's is there, as well as mine," he said, and wished his nephew good speed and a pleasant journey.

Arthur knew his Paris. He made no stay there, going straight from the boat train to the aerodrome, where he would find the plane that would take him to Warsaw. His seat had already been booked by telephone. As he was waiting for the plane to start, he saw a car drive up. In it was a tall, fair man, with blue eyes and a cheerful expression, and a tall, dark girl of striking beauty, who occupied the driver's seat. Arthur watched them alight, and saw them say goodbye in the manner of old friends. He began half-consciously wondering who they were. Not lovers, he thought; but certainly not brother and sister. Yet there was surely some close bond between them. They looked, he decided, like fellow-adventurers, close friends too busy thinking about their common affairs to have thought of falling in love with each other. An attractive pair, he said to himself.

He was glad, therefore, when, having said farewell to the girl and talked to her earnestly for a few minutes, as if he were giving her careful instructions, the man came towards where he was standing, and inquired of a mechanic whether this was the plane for Warsaw. Arthur was glad the man with the laughing eyes was to be his fellow-passenger. He observed him closely as he stood talking to the mechanic, noting his great strength and physical vigour. The man looked somewhere between thirty-five and forty. He had an air of maturity, of being at the very height of all his

powers, mental and physical. He carried himself well and easily, with a light swing of the shoulders as he walked. His blue eyes laughed as he passed some jest with the mechanic. Arthur could see he was the kind of man who made friends at once.

So, when they were bidden take their seats, Arthur climbed gladly into a place beside the unknown, and at once found a way of opening up talk with him. From the weather they soon passed to more interesting topics, especially to discussing the men and countries they had seen. Arthur soon discovered that his new acquaintance had been a great traveller. He seemed to know every part of Europe, from Paris to Moscow. He knew Russia well, and America no less well. London he knew slightly, but the rest of England not at all. Arthur was puzzled to discover his nationality. He did not talk like an American, or, quite, like an Englishman. His English was perfect, but he used some American turns of phrase, and there was a faint suggestion of French in his accent. Arthur tried, by talking about himself and his career at Oxford (saying, of course, nothing of his confidential mission), to make his fellow-passenger do the same. At length he asked him point-blank what his nationality was. "I was born a British subject," was the reply, "but I think I'm a cosmopolitan. I'm at home everywhere."

Arthur did not pursue the subject, and their talk turned to other things. They discussed everything—politics, art, commerce, the ways of women—nothing seemed to come amiss to the stranger. At Prague they had a longish wait, due to some trouble with the engine. They took a meal together, and then went together to see the sights—or rather the stranger showed Arthur the city, with which he was well

acquainted. When at length they reached Warsaw, Arthur was sorry to part with his new acquaintance, who seemed already like a friend. He had, it appeared, urgent business in the city, and was making no stay. Not till he had gone did Arthur fully realise that, though they had spoken of most things, neither had learnt the other's name. Only with Englishmen, he told himself, would that have been possible. The stranger must be an Englishman, who had picked up his Americanisms and his slightly foreign accent through long residence abroad. An American or a foreigner would have been certain to say who he was. Arthur's psychology was a little insular: he had been trained at Oxford.

At Warsaw, Arthur booked a room at the Hotel Foch, which has an excellent cuisine, and, after a good meal, began his search at once. The Hotel Foch itself knew nothing of John Pasquett. No one of that name had been staying there of late. He would need to go further afield. Armed with a list of the principal hotels in the town, and finding no difficulty in making himself understood with his excellent French, varied occasionally by a few words of German, he went his round. At the fifth attempt he had some success. He was told at the Hotel of Poland and the Universe that a Mr. Robertson had left that very afternoon, after spending a week in the hotel. He was a business gentleman from Reval, who had stayed there several times before.

Robertson is a common enough name, but there were hardly likely to be two Robertsons at a place like Reval. And "Robertson, Reval," was the postal address at which Lord Ealing had communicated with Radlett. Probably Robertson would be in touch with Pasquett. Robertson, it appeared, was short and

stout, with a fair moustache, bald, probably about fifty years of age. He had left no address. Having only light luggage with him, he had walked away carrying it, at about three o'clock in the afternoon, in the direction of the main railway station.

Arthur now found himself in a dilemma. It was not Robertson he really wanted, but Pasquett. Should he follow up Robertson, and endeavour to get on Pasquett's track with his help? Or had he better resume his search for Pasquett himself? He decided finally on the latter course. If he could get no direct clue to Pasquett's whereabouts, he could follow up Robertson later. But, in any case, it was too late to do more that evening. He returned to his hotel and went to bed.

Before going to bed, however, he wrote out a message to be telegraphed to his uncle as soon as the office opened in the morning. "No trace yet of P.," he wrote. "Robertson of Reval left here to-day. Am pursuing inquiries. Wire any instructions Hotel Foch.—WHARTON."

On the following morning he returned to his search. The British Embassy, which he tried first, had records of Pasquett's presence in Warsaw on previous occasions, but none of his having been recently in the city. The American Embassy had never heard of him. Arthur next spent a considerable time in vain inquiries at the remaining hotels, followed by a fruitless hour at the railway station, where he interrogated voluble but unhelpful porters and officials. But he had no idea what Pasquett looked like, and he soon saw that this made all such inquiries fruitless. He next tried the Warsaw police, who were most polite, but could give him no word of Pasquett. At length he

made up his mind to return to Robertson's hotel and try to get on his track, as a means of tracing Pasquett indirectly.

Then followed three days of energetic but, for a long time, unproductive activity. He managed to find a Warsaw merchant who had seen Robertson. Robertson, he heard, had gone to Prague. Arthur chased him there, only to discover that he had gone to Berlin. Again Arthur followed, and at last ran Robertson to earth in a Berlin hotel. But here again disappointment awaited him. Robertson knew Pasquett, and had been in Warsaw up to the very day of Arthur's arrival there; but he had not seen Pasquett there, and did not know of his presence in the city. All he could do was to give Arthur introductions to several Warsaw merchants whom Pasquett might have been to see. He himself had last seen Pasquett in Reval, two months before. He did not know Radlett personally, but he said that Pasquett had often spoken of him, and he expressed horror at the circumstances of his death. With an intimate knowledge of Russian affairs, Robertson totally refused to accept the theory that Radlett had been killed by Bolsheviks.

Armed with Robertson's introductions, Arthur returned to Warsaw, writing to Lord Ealing once again to explain how he had fared. All through these days of fruitless inquiry, his uncle had sent him one wire after another inciting him to continue his search, and he had reported each stage of his unsuccessful progress. His second call at Warsaw gave him something more definite to report. The merchant to whom he put his question told him that Pasquett had come to see him on the very day of Arthur's first arrival in Warsaw. But the man had no idea where Pasquett had gone.

He had come on business for the Paris firm of Culpepper, and had left when his business was done, without any hint of his destination. Arthur wired this news to his uncle, and continued his inquiries. He found at length two more merchants on whom Pasquett had paid business calls on the same day, but from neither could he get any news of his later movements. It seemed evident that Pasquett had left Warsaw, and it was still unknown where he had stayed while he was in the city.

Arthur sent a despondent telegram to his uncle, and returned to his hotel. But there he found awaiting him a wire from Lord Ealing. "P. arrived here. Come back. E." it ran. So all his journeyings had been for nothing, after all. As he had surmised at first, Pasquett had gone straight back from Warsaw to London. Possibly he had heard of his partner's murder, and had hastened to the scene of the crime. Possibly he had only fulfilled his original plan. In either case, he—Arthur—had been wasting his time.

Arthur returned to London at his leisure, allowing himself a free day in Paris on his way home. He travelled this time by train and boat, and it was a full week after his departure that he presented himself again at the offices of the Anglo-Asiatic. He had accomplished nothing, but he had enjoyed his wild-goose chase. And his failure did not matter, since Pasquett had turned up in London of his own accord. His one regret was that he had failed to exchange names and addresses with the pleasant companion with whom he had travelled from Paris to Warsaw. The man remained in his thoughts: Arthur wanted to meet him again.

CHAPTER XIII

IN WHICH A BRIGADIER-GENERAL DOES HIS BIT, AND M. PIIP IS MOST COMMUNICATIVE, BUT THE POLICE ARE QUITE PROPERLY BAFFLED

THE days of Arthur Wharton's absence from London were evil days for the political outcasts of that city. Inspector Blaikie, given a free hand by his superior, called in the aid of the Special Branch, and put its officers on the track of Rosenbaum, to the immense delight of Brigadier-General Sir Evan Bunker. Bunker was not an intelligent man—it was said that this defect of his had cost several thousand men their lives during the war—but he was immensely energetic. Things had been very slack of late at the Special Branch, and the chasing of Rosenbaum afforded a magnificent opportunity for the display of the General's qualities.

Bunker's methods lacked *finesse*. Under his direction, every known haunt of advanced opinion in or near the metropolis was raided and searched from top to bottom. A full-dress raid on the King Street headquarters of the Communist Party resulted only in the seizure of a quantity of "seditious" literature. The Liberty Club in Clerkenwell, haunt of a leading Anarchist group, was raided twice, despite the fact, unknown to the Special Branch, that its members looked on Bolsheviks as a shade worse than kings or capitalists. The East End of London was combed fine for suspicious characters, and quite an army of Rosenbaums was

interrogated, and several detained for a few hours until they could prove their identity. None of them was the man. Even the Nineteen Seventeen Club was politely visited, while Mr. Ramsay MacDonald was delivering a lecture on the horrors of Bolshevism.

All in vain. Neither Radlett's dead body, nor Radlett himself in durance vile, was discovered; and Rosenbaum appeared to have vanished into thin air. Every failure stirred General Bunker to more colossal exertions.

Blaikie, meanwhile, pursued his inquiries in a less vigorous fashion. After some trouble, he succeeded in finding the driver of the taxi which had picked up Rosenbaum at Victoria. This was a step forward, but it did not greatly advance matters. Rosenbaum had driven from Victoria to London Bridge Station, where, as inquiries among the porters ultimately revealed, he had repeated almost without variation the procedure he had followed at Victoria. Asking a porter to take charge of his trunk for a few minutes, he had gone into the station. After studying the station indicator, he had returned to say that he had mistaken his train, and found he must drive to Charing Cross. Another taxi had been procured, and he had driven off again, still with his trunk. There, so far, the track ended, for Blaikie could neither find the taxi which had picked him up at London Bridge, nor discover any recollection of him among the porters at Charing Cross. Probably he had not gone there, but had directed the taxi to some other destination. Blaikie tried all the main line stations without success.

The Inspector had a further talk with Mr. Culpepper on the day following the discovery of the crime, journeying down to Enfield to find him. He was received

in a stuffy Victorian sitting-room by Miss Culpepper, who informed him that her brother, prostrated by the shock of his experiences, had taken to his bed. Blaikie had some difficulty in persuading the lady to let him go up to see the invalid, for she maintained firmly that he was very "low," and must on no account be again upset. But finally Blaikie had his way, and was able to question the little man further. About the actual circumstances of the crime, Culpepper had nothing fresh to tell. He did not know Rosenbaum, apart from meeting him at the hotel, and he said he had no suspicion at all of his motives in killing Radlett. But he was able to throw a little fresh light on the case as a whole. Radlett, he said, had been in France several times of late, and had visited him both at his flat in Paris and in his little house on the coast of Normandy. The American millionaire, he told Blaikie, had been travelling a good deal about Europe, using the name "Restington," in order to avoid rousing curiosity. He had been engaged in perfecting his negotiations with the Soviet Government, and had paid several visits to Russia. Culpepper said he had known Radlett years ago in Russia, and the acquaintance had been renewed through John Pasquett, who was an old acquaintance of his own.

Blaikie asked him then about Pasquett. Culpepper said that he had known him, too, in Russia. Then he had lost sight of him until about a year ago, when they had met, quite accidentally, in the streets of Paris. Pasquett had introduced him to Radlett, who was with him at the time. He had found that Pasquett, though not short of money, which Radlett readily provided, was out of a job, and had nothing in particular to do until Radlett's Russian plans matured. Culpepper at

the time was needing a commercial agent for his own firm at Reval, and, as Pasquett had been living there, he offered him the job. Since then, Pasquett had been his agent, residing at Reval, but making frequent journeys to Paris and to the principal markets of Central Europe.

"Then you know where he is now?" asked the Inspector eagerly.

Culpepper did not positively know, but he thought Pasquett was probably in Warsaw. He knew he had business to do there and in one or two other Polish towns before coming to London. He (Culpepper) was expecting him in London in about a week's time, and had intended to stay and see him before returning to his home in Paris.

"You do not live here, then? This is not your house?"

It was not, Culpepper replied; it was his sister's. But he usually stayed with her when he was in London. His own flat was in the Place Geneviève in Paris; but during the summer he spent a good deal of time at his bungalow at Paramé, where his wife and daughter were actually staying at that moment. He had now been in London for about a week, and was proposing to return as soon as he had seen Pasquett.

"You were not concerned in this Russian concession of Mr. Radlett's?"

"Not directly," said Culpepper, although he had hoped, with Radlett's help, to work up a certain amount of exporting trade of his own to Russia, especially Siberia. It was important to him, he made plain, that the concession should go through. Radlett's death had been a very severe blow, especially as Pasquett had no resources of his own, and Culpepper could not

see how the affair was to be carried through without the help of Radlett's money.

"You know Lord Ealing. You knew, I suppose, that the Anglo-Asiatic were to become partners in it?"

"Not from Lord Ealing." Culpepper's dealings with the Anglo-Asiatic had been on commercial business of his own, and in the matter of the concession he had only acted as bearer of certain of Radlett's letters, which he had not seen. It was Pasquett who had told him that Lord Ealing was coming in.

"He told you nothing else?"

"Yes." Pasquett had told Culpepper that he did not much like the proposed participation of the Anglo-Asiatic, and that he thought he could work the thing better in co-operation with a French financial syndicate. But Radlett had been set on bringing in Lord Ealing. Culpepper said he wondered what Pasquett would do now.

"Well, that's not my business," said Blaikie. And, a few minutes later, he bade his visitor good-bye.

Partly as a matter of routine, Blaikie set about verifying the account which Culpepper had given of himself and his affairs. Inquiries of the French police showed that he had spoken the exact truth. He was well known in business circles in Paris, his firm was in quite a comfortable way, and its reputation as good as most. He had a flat in the Place Geneviève, and a small villa at Paramé, where his wife and daughter were at present residing. Pasquett was known to the Paris police as one of his business agents, but his present whereabouts were not known. He was believed to be abroad. Of Radlett and Rosenbaum, the Paris police knew nothing at all.

All this was no more and no less than Blaikie had

expected, but it did not help him in the least in getting on Rosenbaum's trail, which, after all, was the only matter that really concerned him. There remained but one other way of tracking Rosenbaum, so far as he could see. This was to follow his course backwards, in the hope of finding some clue to his present whereabouts. Radlett and his secretary had arrived at Sugden's Hotel on the day preceding the murder. They were believed to have come straight from somewhere on the Continent, but it was not known whence or how they had come. Radlett's last known location had been at Reval, and they might, of course, have come thence all the way by sea. A ship had arrived from Reval on the day before the crime, but the passenger list was small, and it did not take Blaikie long to assure himself that neither Radlett nor his secretary had been on board. This eliminated, numerous possibilities were left. They might have travelled by any of the Continental routes, sailing from any of the ports in Germany or Holland or Belgium or France, or even from Sweden.

In fact, however, the search was not a long one. Examination of the steamship records showed that "Restington" and Rosenbaum had crossed from Ostend to Dover by the regular night service on the night preceding their arrival at Sugden's Hotel. Blaikie went down to Dover and made careful inquiries among the crew of the boat. But none of them had noticed either of the two men—there had been numerous passengers, they said. The passport and customs officers, who had had a very busy time, were also quite unhelpful. They remembered "Restington's" luggage, because of the mineral specimens which it had contained, but they had not noticed Rosenbaum, though they said

that Restington had been in company with another man, and had passed his luggage through with his own.

These inquiries threw no fresh light on the case, and Blaikie reported to his superior that he had done all he could. Wilson had a message sent to the Ostend police, asking them to find out, if they could, whence the two men had travelled to Ostend; but it was unlikely that this could be discovered, or that the knowledge, if secured, would be of much help. Wilson further took steps to follow up all the other passengers who had been on the boat, in order to discover if any of them had spoken to Rosenbaum, or could throw any light on his probable movements. These inquiries were placed in the hands of the local police in the districts in which these passengers lived.

Quick results were not to be expected from such a procedure, and any result was most unlikely. The case seemed to have reached a dead end.

At this point came at last an answer to Scotland Yard's telegram from the police authorities at Reval. Wilson had asked for all available information about all the persons connected with the case, under every name by which he knew them—about Hugh Radlett and John Pasquett, and about any persons passing under the names of "Restington," "Rosenbaum," or "Robertson." The reply was long, and conveyed a good deal of information, which seemed to confirm the conclusions already drawn by the police. It was written in French, but is here presented in Scotland Yard's official translation.

"Concerning the persons of whom you ask, we are able to present the following particulars.

(1) Hugh Radlett. We have never heard of this

person, nor can we trace any record of his having been in this city.

(2) John Pasquett. Has lived in this city, intermittently, for more than a year, in a furnished flat. He came here from Soviet Russia, and registered as a British subject, and is known at the British Consulate. He has engaged in certain commercial dealings in this city, where he represented the Paris house of Culpepper, and is supposed to have business interests in Russia. He is a tall, fair man, over six feet in height, clean shaven, and powerfully built. We have been able to procure a photograph of him, which we enclose. He was last seen here some three weeks ago, when he told his friends he was leaving on a business trip for Warsaw, after which he was going to England. We have no knowledge of his subsequent movements, but we will at once advise you if he returns. He bears, we understand, an excellent reputation in this city.

(3) Restington. A Hugh Restington has stayed for a short period in this city, according to our registration, as the guest of John Pasquett mentioned above. He was a tall, dark man, with graying dark hair and a gray moustache. He was registered as an American citizen. Nothing further seems to be known of him here, save that Pasquett spoke of him as his partner. He appears not to have gone out much during his stay. Our only information of him comes from our police and from the United States Consulate. He left here a month ago for Soviet Russia.

(4) Robertson. Alfred Robertson is a well-known merchant here, the head of the Reval branch of a firm of coal and general traders, whose head office is

in Berlin. He is much respected in this city. He is short and stout, with fairish hair and moustache, aged 41. He has recently left this city for good, departing about a fortnight ago for Cracow, where we understand he is opening a new branch of his firm. He was well acquainted with Pasquett, who has apparently used his office as a place of call for letters, and has had business dealings with him.

(5) Rosenbaum. This man, a most dangerous character, is an important Bolshevik agent, who gave us some time ago much trouble. He is employed by the Third International, situate in Russia, and is principally engaged in missions of agitation to the Communist Parties of the various European countries. He has not been in this country of late, so far as we are aware, but he was deported recently from Latvia back to Russia. He passes under many names—Smerloff, Boris Braun, and Asczinski. His real name, we believe, is Ivan Rosenbaum. His actual appearance is not known to us, as he is believed to be an adept at disguise. He is, of course, a Jew. If he is in your country, beware of him. He is a man capable of everything.

"We trust this information will be of use to you, and assure you of our perfect anxiety to serve you in this and all other matters.—Pip, *Chief of Police.*"

Inspector Blaikie whistled softly as he read this message, handed to him by the Superintendent. "So that's our man, is it? How the devil did he get Radlett to take him on as secretary?"

"That is not what puzzles me, Inspector. What I

want to know is why he killed Radlett, if he did. Or carried him off."

"Wouldn't a man like this be capable of any crime, sir?"

"Oh, quite. But, if the Soviet Government gave Radlett the concession, why should one of their agents murder him in order to take it away again? If they did want to take it away, why not simply cancel it?"

"Perhaps it wasn't the concession he was after at all."

"Then what was it? No. I don't think that will do."

"Didn't Radlett say something about it being some extreme group of Bolsheviks, more extreme than Lenin's lot, who were after him?"

"Yes, he did. And I expect that's the answer. This fellow isn't an agent of the Soviet Government, but of the extreme group, whoever they are."

"That makes it all the worse, if he's at large in England."

"Undoubtedly. It looks as if he is a most dangerous man. But this message isn't much help towards finding him."

"But it does clear up one point in the case, sir. It tells us who Robertson is, and puts him out of the way."

"Hm, yes. It looks as if Robertson was only a convenient postal address. But that's neither here nor there. The point is to find Rosenbaum."

"I've had the Special Branch hard at it, sir, all this week. But there's no trace so far."

"Well, Blaikie, you must keep them at it. And you must have another try to follow the chap up yourself.

Until we get on his track, there is positively nothing else we can do."

There, perforce, the police had to leave the case, for the moment. It seemed plain enough—save for the unfortunate fact that they could not catch the criminal. And there was that little additional mystery about Lord Ealing and his anxiety to get hold of some paper that had been in Radlett's possession. All the time this element of mystery gave Superintendent Wilson an uneasy feeling that he had not really got to the bottom of the hidden motives underlying the crime. He kept wondering about Lord Ealing's connection with the case, but he could find no answer to his riddle.

CHAPTER XIV

IN WHICH LORD EALING SUCCEEDS IN A DESIGN CONCEIVED FOR REASONS BEST KNOWN TO HIMSELF

Lord Ealing was a frequent caller at Scotland Yard during these troublous days. His anxiety to find Pasquett grew hourly; for, despite all possible precautions, the shares of the Anglo-Asiatic were dropping and dropping, and, until Pasquett turned up and agreed to carry on with the concession, there was no prospect of recovery. Even Mr. Benjamin's ingenuity had hardly been able to check the flying rumour that Radlett's death had shattered the Anglo-Asiatic's hopes, that the projected concession was off, and that, to put it plainly, the Corporation had moved from Kingsway to Queer Street.

Lord Ealing kept a brave face before the world, and made a speech full of optimism at a big city dinner, taking good care to refer to the vast openings for British capital and enterprise in the undeveloped quarters of the globe, particularly in Asia. He had no patience, he said, with those who maintained that Great Britain had passed her zenith, or that the vast forces still latent in the modern business system would not be developed to the full by British brains, with the savings of the thrifty British citizen behind them. Even now, vast vistas were opening out: the most glorious achievements of British ingenuity and resource were still in the future. He could tell them. . . .

But the City was not reassured by Lord Ealing's eloquence: Anglo-Asiatics dropped three points on the following day.

Nor did Lord Ealing, when he was by himself, appear to be reassured. Then, he looked gloomy and worried. When he was with Vanzetti and Benjamin, he was cheerful enough, telling them he had no doubt of Pasquett's coming in, or of the concession being carried to a triumphant issue. But it was hard work, keeping up the air of serenity, and Lord Ealing had other things to worry him besides the drop in the Anglo-Asiatic's shares. He kept sending Arthur Wharton messages bidding him spare no trouble in his search for Pasquett, and he constantly either rang up Superintendent Wilson at Scotland Yard, or called there himself in hope of news. He also used every means in his power of ensuring that Pasquett, wherever he was, should hear of his partner's death. He had a good hold on the foreign news agencies, and he saw to it that a full account of the crime was sent out by them to the Continental papers, and regularly followed up. Surely, if Pasquett heard of the crime, he would get into communication at once and come to London with all possible speed. For Pasquett, too, one would suppose, had an interest in putting the concession through. He might communicate either with the Anglo-Asiatic or with the police, but he would hardly lose any time before getting into touch with the one or the other. When the days passed, and no news came, Lord Ealing began to fear that some evil had befallen Pasquett as well as his partner. Could he have been murdered too?

On one of his calls at Scotland Yard, Lord Ealing found Superintendent Wilson out, and was shown into Blaikie's office. This was on the day after the In-

spector's visit to Mr. Culpepper at Enfield, and Blaikie told Lord Ealing what had passed between them. When he mentioned Culpepper's remark that Pasquett had been reluctant to go in with the Anglo-Asiatic, and had been in favour of co-operating with a French syndicate, Lord Ealing's gloom visibly deepened. It was more than ever urgent to find Pasquett at once, if there was a prospect that he might open up negotiations with some rival financial group.

When Blaikie told him of his ill success in tracking Rosenbaum, this, so far from adding to Lord Ealing's gloom, seemed even to cheer him up a little. "I'd take my oath," said Blaikie to Wilson afterwards, "he positively doesn't want Rosenbaum to be caught." Wilson said that Lord Ealing had given him the same impression. "But why," asked Blaikie, "why should he want the murderer to get away? I'm damned if I can understand it."

"Unless we're hopelessly on the wrong track, and Rosenbaum isn't the murderer, after all," said Wilson, "and Lord Ealing knows who is, and doesn't want it to come out."

"There's another curious thing," said Blaikie. "I mentioned to him that we had reason to believe that Pasquett was somewhere in Poland, and, from the way he took it, I'd have sworn he knew that already, and was very much annoyed at our knowing it. But that simply doesn't fit in with his anxiety we should find Pasquett. And I don't see how he could know where Pasquett is, or was."

"He has not seen Culpepper, I suppose."

"No, I'm sure he has not. Have you any news from Warsaw?"

"Nothing yet. I wired to the Warsaw police as soon

as you told me what Culpepper said. But they've not answered yet."

"I dare say Pasquett is not there, after all."

"Very likely not. He may be in Russia for all we know."

"Have you done anything further about Lord Ealing?"

"My dear Inspector, what can I do? I've made every possible inquiry. What is quite plain is that Lord Ealing was not at Sugden's Hotel when the murder was committed. If you have let the idea of his guilt ever cross your mind——"

"His guilt, sir? What do you mean? Rosenbaum's the murderer surely?"

"Perhaps, Blaikie. But Lord Ealing has behaved so suspiciously that I thought it my duty to make sure. And I think it is quite clear that Lord Ealing was at home in bed when it happened, and that by no possible means could he have made his way into Sugden's Hotel without being seen."

"That's so, sir. Nobody could. I'm ready to take my oath on that."

"Very well. That rules out Lord Ealing as a principal—it would be almost too astounding a suspicion in any case—but it does not tell us whether he is an . . . accomplice."

"You mean he may have very good reasons for not wishing Rosenbaum to be caught?"

"Quite so. Rosenbaum might give him away . . . whatever it is he's been up to, and doesn't want us to know. You agree he's been up to something, Blaikie?"

"I hardly know what to say, sir. The late Home Secretary ought to be——"

"Like Cæsar's wife? Quite. But is he? In the light of those finger prints, can we say that he is above suspicion?"

"No, if you put it that way, I suppose we can't."

"Well, then, Blaikie, the fact that Lord Ealing doesn't want us to catch Rosenbaum is a reason the more why we want to catch him quick. Rosenbaum's the man to clear up this Lord Ealing business."

"But, sir, it's incredible. Lord Ealing mixed up with a notorious Bolshevik agitator?"

"I don't pretend to understand it, Blaikie, but there it is. Lord Ealing knows something about this murder, and he's afraid of Rosenbaum. We can't get anything out of Lord Ealing direct, so we must catch Rosenbaum, and get whatever it is out of him."

But catching Rosenbaum was easier said than done. The days passed, and Blaikie pursued his inquiries in vain.

So matters dragged on until a week had passed since the affair at Sugden's Hotel. Nothing more was discovered: the police began to fear that Rosenbaum had got safely out of the country, and to be sure that Radlett, even in the unlikely event of his having been removed from the hotel alive, was by now quite certainly dead. The case seemed to have come to an unsatisfactory and inconclusive termination.

A little more information did, indeed, come to hand. The Polish police reported that Pasquett had actually been in Warsaw, but had left on the very day when they had received the message from Scotland Yard, and, of course, before they had a chance of getting into touch with him. They had been unable to trace his subsequent movements, except that he had gone to

Posen and thence into Germany. There he could only be traced by taking matters up with the German police.

But the Polish authorities further reported that some one had been energetically searching for Pasquett in Warsaw—an Englishman named Arthur Wharton. As they had not known who he was, they had been polite, but had given him no help in his search. They reported these facts in case they might be of interest to the English police.

"Who's Arthur Wharton, Blaikie?" said Wilson. "And what is he doing in search of Pasquett?"

Blaikie picked up a London telephone directory. It contained three Arthur Whartons—a fishmonger in Haverstick Hill, a court dressmaker in Little Tipton Street, and an undescribed Arthur Wharton in Bloomsbury.

"If it's any of them, the last's the most likely. You may as well find out who he is."

In due course, Blaikie found out. Arthur Wharton was an employee of the Anglo-Asiatic Corporation, at present away from England.

"So Lord Ealing did know, and he was after Pasquett on his own," said Wilson when the Inspector told him of this.

"You see what that means, Blaikie? Lord Ealing got some information about Pasquett, and, instead of passing it on to us, tried to get in touch with him without letting us know. That means he wanted to see Pasquett before the police saw him. Now why? Why should he? I'd give something to know what my Lord Ealing has up his sleeve."

Try as he might, Wilson could not guess Lord Ealing's secret. Nor could he see what course next to

pursue. Then, as he sat brooding in his office, came the voice of Lord Ealing on the telephone, very smooth and unexcited. "Is that you, Wilson? May I bring Mr. Pasquett round to see you? Yes, he's here, at my office. At once? Yes, he will come round immediately."

"So he did get at Pasquett first, after all," said Wilson to himself. "Damn," he added softly.

CHAPTER XV

IN WHICH MR. JOHN PASQUETT ARRIVES, AND SHOWS PARDONABLE IMPATIENCE

A WEEK had passed since the day when Lord Ealing went without his breakfast when John Pasquett walked into the offices of the Anglo-Asiatic Corporation. He was told that Lord Ealing was not in the office, and asked his business. The mention of his name not merely smoothed the way, but created at once a flutter of excitement. For, though Pasquett's name had not figured much in public, the staff of the Anglo-Asiatic knew well enough that this must be Radlett's partner —the man for whom the directors were so eagerly searching. Mr. Benjamin was in the office. Would Mr. Pasquett be so good as to come in?

Pasquett went in. He was, as the Reval message had said, a big, fair man, clean shaven, and of fine physique. But he was much more than that. He had one of those faces which are always half-smiling, as if he was perpetually amused. There was a humorous twinkle in his eye, too, and he was used to making friends at sight. It would have been hard to guess his nationality. There was something American about his voice, but it was not American. There was something French, especially about the inflections of his speech, yet it was not quite French. And his easy, confident manners were of no country in particular; they proclaimed him rather the travelled man of the

world, at home in all companies—a man to whom all things came much alike, and most things pleasantly. No wonder Radlett had made a friend of John Pasquett: he had a knack of making friends, and of keeping them.

He and Benjamin made a curious contrast as they shook hands. The little Jew was obviously excited. "Ah, Mr. Pasquett, I am very glad to see you. I have sent a message to Lord Ealing to say that you are here. He, too, will be greatly—delighted. Ach, but it is a terrible business—this. You have heard?"

The smile left Pasquett's face as he replied, "Glad to see you, sir. I had heard nothing till yesterday. I have come at once, as you see." And he pulled from his pocket a copy of the *Matin* of the day before, and passed it across the table. "This is almost all I know even now."

Little Mr. Benjamin took the paper and adjusted his pince-nez. Pasquett had marked a paragraph which stated that it had now been proved that the murder of Hugh Radlett was the work of a dangerous Bolshevik desperado, by name Rosenbaum, who was believed to be still at large in England. The police, it added, had a clue to his whereabouts.

"When I saw that, I was thunderstruck," Pasquett continued. "Of course, I sent for a file of the *Matin* and the *Temps,* and there I found some further particulars of the case. But I know very little. I came at once to see if I could give any help, though I fear I can be of little use. He was my best friend, Mr. Benjamin. It is a terrible shock to me."

"My dear sir, I understand. We, too, we have been much distressed."

"Would you, Mr. Benjamin, kindly tell me at once

what you know of the—murder? I suppose there is no doubt of my poor friend's death, though I understand the body had not been found."

"That is so, Mr. Pasquett. And I fear there is little doubt. Though, I believe, at one time the police half thought Mr. Radlett had been carried off."

"Carried off? Do you mean he may be alive? Have they any clue? Have they searched?"

"Lord Ealing will be able to tell you more than I can. He will doubtless be with us soon. Your pardon, the telephone. Yes. Lord Ealing will be here in a few minutes. Meanwhile, I will tell you what I know."

Benjamin then gave a rapid summary of the case, as far as he knew it, telling Pasquett what had been discovered at Sugden's Hotel. When he mentioned Culpepper, Pasquett gave a cry of surprise. "Culpepper was there?" he said. "Yes, in the cupboard," said Mr. Benjamin gravely, and told him what Culpepper had seen.

"The little rat," said Pasquett. "He might have caught the fellow."

"I think he thought discretion the better part," said Benjamin, and went on to tell Pasquett of the fact that Mr. Franklin, Radlett's lawyer, had the concession and certain other important documents deposited with him by Radlett the day before the crime. But, when he spoke of these, Pasquett sharply but politely pulled him up.

"No, no, Mr. Benjamin. Never mind the papers. No business for me just yet. I have come here to find poor Hugh's murderer, and, by God, I mean to do it. . . . Forgive me if I am violent, Mr. Benjamin; I'm not quite myself. This affair has upset me."

"Naturally, my dear sir, naturally," said Mr. Benjamin, soothingly.

"Now, about this Rosenbaum," Pasquett had begun, when Lord Ealing came hastily into the room. Mr. Benjamin muttered an introduction, and retired into the background.

John Pasquett greeted Lord Ealing with his pleasant smile. He had recovered his self-possession by now. "I came to you first," he said. "I do not know a single soul in England—except Culpepper, if he's still here."

"Where are you staying?"

"At the Avenue Hotel, at present. I am a stranger to London."

"Ah, we can do better than that . . . better than that. I shall be offended if you do not put up with me. In Berkeley Square, you know. Then we can arrange matters at our leisure."

"I was just telling Mr. Benjamin business could wait till this matter of poor Hugh's death is cleared up."

"Oh, of course, of course. I have been doing all I can, I assure you. Everything that could be done to stir the police to action, I have done. Believe me, you had better come to Berkeley Square. The police know me. They will give you most help if you're with me. I used to be Home Secretary, you know."

Pasquett seemed unwilling at first to avail himself of Lord Ealing's ready hospitality. But at length he agreed, with very hearty thanks. The argument that it would help with the police seemed to have won him over.

"So that's settled. Now, what has Benjamin told you?"

"Just a brief summary of the case, my lord. No business," Mr. Benjamin put in.

"No, of course, of course. Now, I dare say I can tell you some things Benjamin doesn't know."

Before long, Lord Ealing had made Pasquett thoroughly master of the case in all its details—except certain little details about himself which he believed to be unknown to the police. He did not attempt to talk business, anxious as he was to do so; for he was even more anxious to win John Pasquett's regard and to establish close relations between them. Only one thing he was insistent upon. Pasquett must see Mr. Franklin at the earliest possible moment, because Franklin had very important communications to make to him at Radlett's personal request. And he must say nothing to any one else till he had seen Franklin. "I can drive you there now," he said, "and then we can go on to Scotland Yard."

But Pasquett would not agree. "No. I must go to Scotland Yard at once," he said. "I ought really to have gone there immediately I landed. Franklin can wait."

"Surely he may have things to say you ought to know before you see the police."

"If he has, I can see the police again. No, Lord Ealing, I will not lose more time. I must see at once if I can do anything to put the police on the track of the criminal. You admit it is just possible poor Hugh may still be alive. You see that not a moment must be lost."

Lord Ealing gave in gracefully. "I'll drive you to Scotland Yard," he said. "I'll just 'phone through first and say we're coming. Benjamin, get me on to Wilson, will you?"

And so Superintendent Wilson received the message which told him of John Pasquett's arrival in England.

. . . . . .

"So you have not seen Mr. Radlett since you parted from him at Reval?" It was Superintendent Wilson who asked the question.

"No," said Pasquett. "You see, he left me to go off to Moscow. He was to see the Commissary of Labour and fix up about the conditions of employment when we got to work. I had a letter from him, written from Moscow, telling me about when he would be in London, and asking me to join him here about now. I had certain business arrangements to make before joining him. I have been in Warsaw, and have just come back from Poland."

"You came through Prague, I suppose?" Lord Ealing put in.

"No, I had to go to Posen and then to Berlin. I came straight through from there to Paris, and only arrived in London this morning. It was in Paris I first heard about Hugh Radlett." Again Pasquett got the copy of yesterday's *Matin* out of his pocket, and looked at it. "And now I'm here to help you find Hugh's murderer." Pasquett smiled a sad smile at the Superintendent as he spoke. "I suppose the paper's right about this Rosenbaum having done it."

"Right enough, I fear. A most desperate character. You say Mr. Radlett never mentioned him to you?"

"Never heard of the fellow in my life. I can't think where poor Hugh picked him up."

"That's one of the odd points about the case, it seems to me," said Wilson.

"Now, look here, Mr. Wilson. I'm not a rich man,

but you can take it that every penny I have goes to find the man who killed poor Hugh. And you can use me in any way you like. I want to be used. I shan't be at peace unless I'm doing something. It knocks a man over—a thing like this."

"Yes, Mr. Pasquett; but I think we are doing all that can be done." And Wilson, who had already given Pasquett a full outline of the case, told him briefly exactly what the police were doing to locate Rosenbaum.

"Yet you haven't found him, so far. That means he's lying pretty low. And you haven't traced the fellow beyond London Bridge—or found the trunk, or really discovered anything. Sorry if I seem a bit ungracious, Superintendent. But that's about the state of the case, isn't it?"

Wilson had to admit that it was, but information might come to hand at any minute. There were a number of men out on the job.

"But when this paper said you had a clue, it was talking through its hat?"

Wilson laughed. "You're very frank, Mr. Pasquett. But I'm afraid you're not far wrong."

Pasquett got up from his chair, and walked to the window. He stood there for a minute staring out. Then he spoke.

"Well, sir, I'm going to make a suggestion to you. I never heard of this man Rosenbaum, but I do know Russia and Russians. What about my trying a little private detecting on my own? I can tell them I've come from Russia, and that I'm keen on re-establishing Anglo-Russian trade and seeing the Soviet Government given a fair chance—which is true enough, by the way. I can go about making speeches to the 'comrades' and

keep my eyes open. I may be able to spot this Rosenbaum for you. Of course, I shan't go under my own name, in case they know it. What do you say?"

"My dear Mr. Pasquett," said Lord Ealing, "I hope you will do nothing of the sort. I'm sure, Wilson, you ought not to allow it. A most foolhardy proposal."

Pasquett smiled. "I've done much more foolhardy things in my time, Lord Ealing," he said. "Besides, I don't think there's much danger in it. I know how to look after myself."

"Of course," said Wilson, "if Mr. Pasquett does anything of the sort, he will need to have the fullest protection from the police."

"No—thanks all the same. No police protection for me. It would mean being spotted at once. It wouldn't give me half a chance. I mean to get right among them, mind you."

"But," said Lord Ealing, "you must not risk your life. Everything hangs on you, now——"

"Mr. Pasquett is quite right," said Wilson. "If he does this, and I am very doubtful if he should—he had better do it on his own. Of course, we can arrange for the police to be ready to help him at any moment, if they are needed."

"Then you agree?" said Pasquett, grasping the Superintendent by the hand. "Excellent! I'll make my arrangements at once." He turned to Lord Ealing. "But I fear it means no Berkeley Square for me just yet. Will you let me off?"

"My dear fellow, you'll be welcome, whenever you come. But do let me persuade you not to do this foolhardy and quite useless thing. Believe me, the police will find out all there is to be found out. Detecting is

not a job for amateurs, except in the novels. You'll do no good, and you'll only get into trouble."

"See here, Lord Ealing, I want to be good friends with you, and with every one else. But you and Mr. Wilson have got to understand right now that Hugh Radlett comes first with me, and that everything else must stand aside till this affair is cleared up. I couldn't rest, doing nothing. Even if I'm likely to do no good, I must try. And Mr. Wilson here thinks I might do some good, don't you?"

"Lord Ealing's attitude," said Wilson, "is very complimentary to the police. But, in this case, I confess we are making no progress, and should welcome outside help."

"Then that's that," said Pasquett. "I hope you won't be offended, Lord Ealing. You see how I feel."

"My dear chap, I understand perfectly. I honour you for it. But——"

"Please, no 'buts.' I know I'm worrying you. I'll try to make up for it later."

An attractive fellow, thought Lord Ealing to himself. Even on him, John Pasquett's personality was beginning to exercise its fascination.

Wilson had made up his mind. Taking something from a drawer, he wrote a few words. Then he handed across the table a small badge. "If you show this," he said, "you'll get the full help of the police whenever you want it. I wish you luck. Have you any plan?"

"Only to go wherever these Bolshevik fellows hang out, tell my story and what I've seen in Russia, and pick up what I can. Where do they hang out for a start? I'm a stranger here. I'll tell them I'm an American. I really am a Canadian, you know."

Then followed a conversation in which Pasquett

learnt what was known to the police about the various Bolshevik groups in England, and their headquarters and places of meeting. He announced that he would begin with a call at King Street, and try to see Ross, whom the police seemed to regard as the real leader of the British extremists. Thereafter, he would know better how to proceed. He would keep his rooms at the Avenue Hotel while his investigation was in progress, and come to Lord Ealing as soon as it was over.

When the door closed on Pasquett and Lord Ealing, Superintendent Wilson was left thinking hard. Pasquett had been able to tell him little. He had never heard of Rosenbaum, Radlett's secretary, and the inference was that Radlett had picked the fellow up during his recent visit to Russia. This seemed likely enough, and bore out the conclusion that Radlett had been the victim of an extremist plot. He had told Pasquett in his letter, written from Moscow, that he had received anonymous threatening letters, menacing his life unless he abandoned the concession. But he had said also that he did not take these seriously, as they came only from factions hostile to the Soviet Government.

Wilson reckoned himself a good judge of men, and Pasquett had appealed to him at once, not only as a pleasant and very straightforward person, but also as shrewd and thoroughly capable.

He was running, indeed, a very serious risk; for presumably the man who had put Hugh Radlett out of the way would be equally anxious to prevent Pasquett from taking up the concession. Still, his identity might not be discovered, and American visitors to England had a way of poking about among the extremist organisations which would help to disarm sus-

picion. And the police had not made such progress with the case that they could afford to neglect offers of outside assistance. Rosenbaum must be found.

But why had Lord Ealing been so anxious to dissuade Pasquett from undertaking this mission? Wilson's suspicions about that nobleman would keep coming back into his mind. Of course, the explanation might be only that he wanted to get down to business at once, and that Pasquett's pre-occupation with the murder stood in the way. But was that all? Or was it the case that Lord Ealing was really afraid that Pasquett would find Rosenbaum where the police had failed? There was something odd, something almost furtive, about the late Home Secretary's attitude. "Oh, damn!" said the Superintendent softly to himself.

Blaikie came in, with some news. A message had at last come from the British Trade Commission at Moscow, but it told them nothing. Hugh Radlett, the Commissioner said, had been negotiating with the Soviet Government for a big concession. So much he knew, and he had heard of Rosenbaum as a well-known agent of the Third International. But he could not trace any connection between Rosenbaum and Radlett, nor could—or would—the Russian authorities throw any light on Rosenbaum's present whereabouts. He had not met Radlett, or heard of his being in Moscow for some time, but the Russian authorities would give him no information, and he could say nothing with certainty. Of Pasquett he had never heard, and the name "Restington" conveyed nothing to him.

Wilson said he had expected nothing from Moscow; indeed, there was hardly anything to expect. Blaikie's second piece of news was of greater interest. He had at last found the man who had driven Rosenbaum from

London Bridge to Charing Cross, and here, it appeared, Rosenbaum had behaved in exactly the same way as at the previous stations. He had asked a porter to mind his luggage for a few minutes, and had then got yet another cab, and driven off again. Blaikie had found the porter, who remembered both Rosenbaum and the trunk.

"But didn't you ask all the porters at Charing Cross before?"

"Yes; but this chap was away ill with influenza when I made my inquiries, and I missed him."

"I see. Have you found out where Rosenbaum went after leaving Charing Cross?"

"No. I'm trying, of course. I've been now to all the big stations in London again in order to make sure whether he repeated this trick any more times. But I can't find traces of him at any of the others."

"The probability is he didn't go by train at all—at least then. All this business of the railway stations was obviously meant to throw us off the track. Probably in the end he hired a car. It's too big a job, I fear, to inquire of all the private car agencies, but you might try a selected list."

"I'll try, sir. But I'm not hopeful of tracing the fellow that way. Even if we do find how he started off, the scent will be pretty cold by now."

"Any answers to those inquiries about the passenger who was with him on the ship coming over?"

"We've found several of them, but none of them seems to have noticed Rosenbaum, or spoken to him. There's a man who spoke with Radlett, we think, but they only passed the time of day."

"Well, Inspector, it's a case, I'm afraid, of trusting to luck. We've done all we can. Unless this Rosen-

baum or some clue to where he is turns up by a lucky chance, I don't see what we can do. It looks bad. And now I have a new job for you."

Wilson then told Inspector Blaikie about Pasquett's return and the plan which he had suggested, and instructed him, unostentatiously, to keep half an eye on him, lest he might get into mischief.

"I suppose Pasquett's all right, sir. Doesn't he stand to get all Radlett's money?"

Wilson hesitated before replying. "I think he is all right," he said slowly. "He seems to have been in Warsaw when it all happened, and his own story tallies exactly with what we heard from the Polish police."

"Still, sir, might it be as well to make sure?"

"Quite, quite. I was meaning to wire again to the Berlin police for confirmation. But I've seen Pasquett and he looks to me all right. He impressed me very favourably, though it doesn't do to trust one's impressions too far. But you'll say so, too, Blaikie, when you've met him."

"Shall I wire to Berlin, sir?"

"By all means. As a matter of routine, we ought to make quite sure."

"Not necessary to send a man out, I suppose?"

"Oh, no. The Berlin police will tell us all we want."

CHAPTER XVI

IN WHICH MR. PASQUETT QUITE SEES THE POINT

John Pasquett, under pressure, agreed to dine with Lord Ealing in Berkeley Square on the night of his arrival, putting off his self-imposed mission till the following day. From Scotland Yard, Lord Ealing had driven him to Mr. Franklin's office, where he had left him, after speaking a few private words in the lawyer's ear, before Pasquett came into the room. When Lord Ealing had gone, Franklin gave his visitor a full account of the terms of Hugh Radlett's will. Pasquett seemed greatly moved. "I knew," he said, "Hugh had left me something, and I knew about that power of attorney. But, of course, I always thought most of the money would go to his relatives in America. Poor Hugh! He was a real friend. It makes one feel a bit rotten, though, cutting his daughter out of the money. And I shall only lose it. Money and I never did stay long together. . . . I suppose you've communicated with his lawyer in New York," he added, after a pause.

"I cabled on the day of the crime," said Mr. Franklin. "And I had a cable back telling me to take all necessary steps. Since then, a letter has come—in fact, to-day—telling me how matters stand. You are a fortunate man, Mr. Pasquett. Mr. Radlett's fortune amounts to about——"

"Never mind that just yet. What about the daughter? How is she off?"

"Very well indeed, I think. She got what was left of her mother's ten million dollars when Mrs. Treves—Mrs. Radlett that was—died. And she gets fifty thousand more under the will. Though Mr. Radlett meant to cut that out, if he had lived."

"Still, I feel I'm doing her out of a lot she ought to have. I ought to do something for her."

"In fact, Mr. Pasquett, you are not doing her out of a penny. Under Mr. Radlett's old will, she would have got nothing at all. I understand that the whole estate would have gone to charity."

"I suppose I ought to feel as bad about it that way. But I don't, somehow. Doing down a charity never seems as bad as doing down some one real, does it?"

"Most men would jump at your luck and ask no questions."

Pasquett sighed. "Well, at least it means I can do something big at last. I've been just pottering round with small things all my life so far. And it means I need spare nothing to bring Hugh's murderer to justice."

He then told Franklin of the scheme he had devised for tracking Rosenbaum. The lawyer did his best to dissuade him, but Pasquett was set upon it. "I start off to-morrow," he said. "I only hope the luck's with me."

Lord Ealing's dinner was a very quiet little affair. Only the three chief directors of the Anglo-Asiatic were present to meet Pasquett. Lord Ealing would not have asked even them, but he had feared the effect on their minds of seeming to keep Pasquett to himself. Business was a forbidden subject. Lord Ealing had positively forbidden Sir James Vanzetti so much as to mention it, though the financier, who became more

gloomy every day as the shares of the Corporation dropped lower and lower, had given only a most reluctant promise. "The man must be an absolute fool," he said. "Why can't he talk business? A lot of damned sentimental nonsense, I call it. Radlett's dead, ain't he? What good'll it do him to go mooning round after his body? What I say is business is business, and if a chap can't attend to business when he's wanted, then I've no use for him."

Lord Ealing had stemmed the torrent by remarking that he rather thought they had a very distinct use for Mr. Pasquett, whatever sort of man he was.

"Oh, damn it all, Ealing. Have it your own way," Vanzetti had answered. "I'll talk about the blasted weather."

It was not, Lord Ealing felt, altogether a successful little party. He laid himself out to be charming to John Pasquett, and he flattered himself he could be very charming when he chose. And Pasquett showed himself a delightful companion, with a fund of good stories about his Russian experiences, and yet without the raconteur's frequent vice of monopolising the conversation. Pasquett knew how to listen as well as to talk. He was properly deferential to Lord Ealing when he spoke of politics and of the great names of British political life. And Lord Ealing actually enjoyed Pasquett's stories, told with that pleasant accent—French, yet not French—which added to the attraction of everything he said. He and John Pasquett, he was sure, would have no difficulty in coming to an excellent understanding.

Mr. Benjamin, too, was on his best behaviour, saying comparatively little, and keeping his unfortunate tendency to relapse into guttural German exclamations

well in check. The trouble was with Vanzetti. The fellow had obviously been drinking when he arrived, and he drank more during dinner. Vanzetti was loud-voiced and truculent at all times; when he had dined too well he became quarrelsome and roared at the top of his voice. Despite his promise, he tried several times to introduce the subject of the concession, and Lord Ealing had to check him firmly. But at length he put Pasquett a direct question. "Are you coming in with us, Pasquett?" he said. "That's what I want to know. I'm sick of all this beating about the bush."

Pasquett was not put out. He simply smiled at Vanzetti, and said there would be plenty of chances of talking about that later on. "But a fellow wants to know where he is, you know," Vanzetti insisted. "At present, enjoying this very excellent dinner of Lord Ealing's," Pasquett answered, and rapidly changed the subject. Lord Ealing felt that, though Pasquett had successfully put Vanzetti off, one of his fellow-directors, at least, was making no favourable impression. And, after his setback, Vanzetti simply sulked the rest of the evening, though Pasquett was obviously doing his best to be friendly.

The following morning Pasquett was to set out on his self-imposed task of hunting down the murderer of his friend. Once he had gone, heaven alone knew how long it would be before he came back, or there was another chance of talking business with him. And, by the time he came back, it might be, from the standpoint of the Anglo-Asiatic, too late to be of any use. The shares of the Corporation were still dropping, and creditors became more and more pressing as each day brought fresh rumours of impending collapse. Under

certain conditions, that might suit Lord Ealing excellently, but he must somehow make sure that Pasquett meant to come in. By hook or by crook, Pasquett must be persuaded to talk business. Lord Ealing determined to throw himself frankly on the mercy of his guest. He contrived, therefore, to get Vanzetti and Benjamin out of the house fairly early, and to make Pasquett stay behind for a further talk before returning to his hotel.

"I am going to be quite frank with you, Mr. Pasquett," he said. "You can do me a great favour without in any way prejudicing your search for poor Radlett's murderer. It is of vital importance that we should know where we stand about this concession. . . . No, please let me finish . . . please. Rumours have got about that the affair is off, and these rumours are prejudicially affecting our position in the City. Now, I take it you mean to go on with the thing, as soon as the more pressing affair is cleared up. If I'm right, I want to ask you to recognise our position. Will you let me talk business to you for a few minutes? I won't mention the matter again after this till you tell me I may. Now, I ask you very specially. It can't interfere with what you want to do." Lord Ealing smiled his most winning smile.

"If you put it like that, of course I will. Go ahead. It only seemed wrong, somehow, to be talking business with poor Hugh——"

"I know. Now, Mr. Pasquett, I want you just to assure me privately that you do mean to come in. Subject, of course, to reasonable terms. Just tell me in confidence, and I will promise not to say a word about it to a single soul until you give me leave. It is just in order to relieve my mind, you know. Surely

Mr. Radlett would have wished you to go in with us?"

"You want me to give you a sort of pledge, in confidence?"

"If you will do that, it will ease my mind a great deal. And there is no need for you to mention the matter again until this dreadful affair is cleared up."

"Right. I'll do that. Here's my hand on it. Anything else?"

"Well, of course, we shall have to send some one out to Russia to make sure it's all right, both at Moscow and on the Yenisei. Will you be going out yourself to get things started, or sending some one?"

"Oh, I reckon I shall see the thing through myself. You see, I know mining, and I know the Russians."

"You will not object if I report to my Board that I am sending out experts with you to go into the whole position on the spot. I thought of Mr. Alison, who is our best mining engineer, and my nephew, Arthur Wharton. You must meet him, by the way. He's abroad at present."

"Of course, I shan't go till this business is settled—about Hugh, I mean."

"Of course not. I only want to get the thing clear in our own minds. Then you'll come in, on the terms mentioned in our correspondence with Radlett?"

"Certainly I will."

"Thank you, Mr. Pasquett. I would not have asked you unless it had been really urgent. I suppose you are in touch with Mr. Radlett's lawyer in New York."

"Oh, I just told Franklin to do what was necessary, and not bother me at present."

"These operations will need a lot of money. We must see about raising our share. What do you say

to a couple of million—a million from us and the same from you?"

"Really, Lord Ealing, I don't feel like talking in terms of the money just now. I haven't quite given up hope that Hugh may be alive, and it would be his money, you see."

"Very well. I dare say that can wait a week or two. But I mentioned that amount as approximately what will be wanted."

"Yes, that'll be all right. Hugh said it would mean at least a couple of million—probably more. You may take that as agreed. If he doesn't—turn up, I'll go into the whole thing with you as soon as I can."

"It is really very good of you, Mr. Pasquett, to relieve my anxiety. It is understood, is it not, that neither of us says a word of the matter to anybody till this trouble is over?"

"How about reassuring the City? Didn't you say you wanted to stop certain rumours?"

"Oh, we can face these for a week or so, now that my own mind is clear. If the shares do drop a bit, they'll come up again when we can say publicly that the thing is going on."

"If that suits you, it suits me," said Pasquett.

"Then it's agreed, between you and me," said Lord Ealing gravely. "So that's all right."

Pasquett promised further to keep Lord Ealing informed of his address, as far as he could, if he had to leave London, and to take the earliest opportunity of meeting Arthur Wharton at his uncle's house.

"You will like him," said Lord Ealing. "He's a nice boy—not quite broken in yet, but shaping very well. Alison's rather a queer customer, but I expect you will get along with him all right."

CHAPTER XVII

IN WHICH THE CITY IS PUZZLED, AND ARTHUR WHARTON LETS A KITTEN OUT OF THE BAG

"I'm damned if I can make it out at all," said one stockbroker to another in the train, as they sped back to their homes at Croydon. "Anglo-Asiatics rose another point to-day . . . and they ought, by all the rules of the game, to be falling."

"They fell pretty heavily after the murder of that fellow Radlett," said the other.

"And for some time before," said the first speaker, "except for that rise when the report of that proposed concession in Russia leaked out."

"But it was the murder knocked the bottom out of them."

"Yes, that's what makes it so odd they should be rising now. Especially with that chap Pasquett refusing to contradict the rumour that the whole thing is off. And I know for a fact that Vanzetti has been selling. He was cursing round at the club about his luck. The shares rose just after he'd sold a big block at a heavy loss."

"Vanzetti ought to know, one would think. But it's clear enough some one's been buying—heavily. Some one must have inside information. I'm half inclined to buy myself."

"I agree somebody's been monkeying with the market. The trouble is to know whether some one was

'bearing' the shares till this last week or so, or whether some one's bulling them now. If you buy now, you stand to make if it's a bear, but you get let in if it's a bull. I shall keep out of it till things get a bit clearer."

"I'm putting my money on it being a 'bear.'"

"Who's the bear, then?"

His friend lowered his voice. "What's to stop that chap Pasquett from pretending to stay out when he means to come in? Down comes the price, and he buys—cheap. Then he says he's coming in. Up goes the price, and he sells—dear. Smart! That's what I think."

"There's more than one buyer in it, anyway. Smithers was saying there were at least two big buyers in the field."

"And between them, they'll soon spoil their own game by forcing up the price. Eh?"

"Oh, if that concession comes off, it'll go up much further yet. But what's to stop the whole thing being a bull? Suppose Ealing is trying to force up the price of his own shares, and there's nothing really behind it?"

"That would hardly square with Vanzetti selling out."

"Not unless Ealing was doing a bit on his own, without letting Vanzetti know, and I admit that's hardly likely. Still, it may be a bull for all that."

"There'll be some heavy selling pretty soon if it is. But I can't believe that. My instinct is to buy, and hold for a big rise."

"Well, you know your own business best, old chap. But I shan't touch it. It looks to me a fishy business, and I'll keep out. I've got a family to keep, I have."

There were a good many conversations of this kind

during the days following John Pasquett's arrival in England. On the day following his conversation with Lord Ealing, many of the newspapers published a paragraph, "from a well-informed source," stating positively that Pasquett had refused to go in with the Anglo-Asiatic, and that the concession was off. This was denied the next day in general terms, by Lord Ealing, himself, but Pasquett, interviewed at his hotel, refused to make any statement, and, in face of this, Lord Ealing's denial produced no effect. Lord Ealing had not said that the concession was going on; he had only denied that it was settled that it was not. The City drew its own inferences from Pasquett's silence. There was a further heavy drop in Anglo-Asiatics.

Then, mysteriously, for no reason that anybody could give a name to at first, they began to rise, and continued slowly and steadily rising. The City became aware that there were big buyers in the field, but there was no means of ascertaining who these buyers were or what they were up to. Their identity was carefully kept dark, and the City was left to draw its own deductions. How these varied can be seen from the conversation reported above. The rise might be a product of legitimate buying, perhaps following a definite scheme to force down the shares, or it might be mere speculative buying by some group that was engineering a bull. How was a fellow to tell?

. . . . . .

Before the rise began, or it was known that large buyers were in the field, the three leaders of the Anglo-Asiatic had many agitated talks together, and Vanzetti, who had made another unsuccessful attempt to get Pasquett to talk business, and had been thoroughly

snubbed for his pains, came to Lord Ealing one day and announced that, unless he got an assurance that Pasquett was coming in with him, he should sell out his holdings in the Anglo-Asiatic. "Look here, Ealing," he said, "if these infernal shares drop any lower, I'm done. I believe that blighter Pasquett means to let us down. Blaikie says he's been talking about going in with a French syndicate. It's all humbug, of course, refusing to talk business till he's avenged Radlett's murder. Damned nonsense! He's fixing things up with the French chaps behind our backs. What do you say, eh? Shall we sell?"

"You must use your own judgment, Vanzetti. Personally, I shall stick to my shares, and trust to Pasquett to play straight. You may sell: I shall hold—for the present."

"It's not so bad for you," said the big man. "You can stand it. You ain't got anything out of Pasquett, have you? I mean, he hasn't tipped you the wink?"

"My dear fellow, the only possible course with Mr. Pasquett is to let him have his own way. If we press him for a decision now, he'll only say 'No.' "

"Well, Ealing, I tell you straight, I believe he's double-crossing us. You can hold if you like; I'm selling."

So Vanzetti sold his shares, while Lord Ealing—well, anyhow, the day after Vanzetti sold, Anglo-Asiatics began to rise.

. . . . . .

John Pasquett was still in London, at the Avenue Hotel. He was making good progress with his plan of getting upon terms with the British Bolshevik leaders, and had begun discreetly pushing his inquiries among

them. He had made a speech or two about the necessity of recognising Russia and re-opening effective trade relations as a means of preventing unemployment, and he told Superintendent Wilson that he was getting on well, and hoped soon to come by definite news of Rosenbaum's whereabouts. Bolshevism was very active on the Clyde, and he had made up his mind to go there with introductions from the London leaders. Before leaving, he had arranged to see Wilson once more in order to talk over what he should do if he got on Rosenbaum's track while he was in Glasgow.

The police, meanwhile, had been doing all they could to trace Rosenbaum's movements further. The last they knew of him was that, after repeating his now familiar manœuvre at Charing Cross, he had driven off again in another taxi; but no sign of the driver of the taxi could be discovered. This was not really surprising, for the unfortunate driver had, on the day on which he picked up Rosenbaum, caught the prevalent influenza and taken to his bed. He had died three days later, quite unconscious of holding in his possession a valuable clue. The Rosenbaum trail thus came to a dead end, and all Blaikie's efforts to pick it up again were so far unavailing.

Blaikie had more luck, however, in following out Wilson's instructions to discover who was the Arthur Wharton who had been inquiring for Pasquett in Warsaw. When he found that Wharton was employed by the Anglo-Asiatic, he whistled to himself, and decided to do nothing further without consulting Wilson. The Superintendent sent him back to Wharton with a straight question, which put that young man in a very awkward predicament. "Why," Blaikie asked him, "were you inquiring after Mr. Pasquett in War-

saw?" Arthur replied that he had gone to Warsaw on business for the Anglo-Asiatic, and had known that the Corporation were very anxious to get into touch with Pasquett.

"What made you think he was in Warsaw?" asked the Inspector.

"Er . . . Radlett's lawyer, Mr. Franklin, thought he might be," said Arthur, after a vain mental search for some way of escape.

"Oh, Mr. Franklin thought so. Was it on his behalf you went out?"

"Partly. I went on business."

"Who sent you?"

"The Anglo-Asiatic."

"From what individual did you get your instructions?"

"From my uncle—Lord Ealing," said Arthur, miserably.

"Why couldn't you have said that at first?" said the Inspector.

When Blaikie reported this conversation to Superintendent Wilson, the latter said merely, "That was what I thought." But he asked both Lord Ealing and his nephew to call upon him at Scotland Yard on the following day. The incident was probably unimportant, but, even if it was, Lord Ealing must be made aware that his attempt to steal a march on the police had not passed unnoticed. He would see Lord Ealing first, and then the young man who had been his instrument in this little piece of chicanery. Politely, of course, he meant to give them each a piece of his mind. And the interview might be the means of getting something further out of Lord Ealing.

CHAPTER XVIII

SHOWING HOW ARTHUR WHARTON MET HIS FRIEND AGAIN, AND HOW THE ARREST OF A CRIMINAL IS NOT ALWAYS WELCOME

Superintendent Wilson got to his office early on the morning on which he had arranged to have his interviews with Lord Ealing and Arthur Wharton, but on his arrival he found General Bunker, Chief of the Special Branch, already awaiting him. Bunker was obviously in a high state of excitement, and immensely pleased with himself. His first words told his exciting news.

"I've got your man, Wilson," he said. "Got him. Just in time, too. He'd have been out of the country before you could say Jack Robinson."

"May I ask, my dear General, whom you have got?"

"Why, Rosenbaum. Two of my men nabbed him at Liverpool last night."

"My dear Bunker, this is . . . fine. I suppose you really have got the right man?"

"Oh, not a doubt of it. The fellow was trying to slink out of the country. He was living in Streatham, and posing as a respectable citizen. There are hundreds of these infernal Bolshevik agitators in our midst, in the pay of Lenin and the Germans."

"Yes, yes. But I thought we had looked pretty thoroughly into the records of all the Rosenbaums in London."

"My dear Wilson, that's just where you went wrong. Of course the fellow doesn't call himself Rosenbaum. He says his name is Rose. But my men soon spotted him as one of these crypto-Jew alien enemies in our midst. As I was saying——"

"Quite, quite. How did you discover that this man Rose——"

"Rosenbaum. Give him his proper name."

"That this man was connected with the crime?"

"Ah, that's where our files came in. We have the completest record of all these fellows and their aliases. Now, I found that this man, who calls himself Rose, is the head of a firm called Lewis and Smith—Levi and Schmid, obviously—trading with Sweden and the Baltic. 'Ha!' I said to myself, 'Russian agents, what!' I went into the thing carefully, and I found —what do you think—that this man Rosenbaum was fined during the war for showing lights to guide enemy aeroplanes during raids."

"Fined, you say? It seems an inadequate punishment."

"Oh, of course, he said it was only a servant's negligence had left a window imperfectly covered. They all said that. As soon as I found he was a Hun, I put half a dozen men on the job. He was away from home all the night of the murder, and his cook says he came back with a big trunk on the following day, and hid it in an outhouse. One of my men made up to the cook. Wormed it out of her. Sharp work that!"

"Have you found the trunk?"

"Of course the trunk's gone now. Not had time to trace it yet. I only got wind of this yesterday, and heard at the same time that this chap was starting off on a journey. My men tracked him to Euston, where

he booked for Liverpool. One of them shadowed him up in the train, while the others dashed back, saw me, and got a warrant. He was arrested in Liverpool last night. They are bringing him and his luggage back to London by the first train. He'll be here before lunch-time."

"Very smart work, Bunker, if only it's the right man, as I hope it is. The Special Branch seems to have stolen a march on us this time."

"Not bad, I think," said Bunker, preening himself before the fire.

At this moment, there was a knock at the door, and an attendant ushered in Lord Ealing. That nobleman looked at the two officials, and greeted them affably. Wilson's response was cold, but General Bunker was far too full of his achievement to keep it to himself for a moment.

"Hallo, Ealing," he said. "Glad to see you. Got a bit of new for you, too. Little bit of smart work. We've arrested Rosenbaum. Now things'll be coming out, eh?"

Lord Ealing stopped dead in his advance, and stared at the two men. For an instant he went white, and made an inarticulate utterance, that sounded half like consternation. Then, rapidly recovering himself, he smiled at the General. "Upon my word, Bunker, that's good news. One couldn't rest easy with that fellow at large. Have you found . . . anything else?"

"Oh, Rosenbaum's enough to be going along with. We'll soon get the whole story out of him. The fellow's a German spy as well as a Bolshevik agitator. You bet we will make him tell all he knows."

"Not much to tell, is there? The case seems pretty plain."

Lord Ealing's discomfiture on first hearing the news of Rosenbaum's arrest did not escape Wilson's notice. He could not mistake the signs. Lord Ealing was afraid. But what the devil was he afraid of? What could Rosenbaum tell that would adversely affect Lord Ealing? And what connection had his fears with his sinister meddling with Hugh Radlett's papers after the crime, or with that curious action of his in trying to get at Pasquett behind the backs of the police? Wilson determined to get rid of Bunker quietly and put Lord Ealing through a careful, but quite polite, little examination. He could not see light, but that might help him.

Bunker, however, would not go. There he stayed, planted on the hearth-rug, explaining at infinite length to Lord Ealing the prowess of the Special Branch. And Wilson could see that Lord Ealing, under cover of listening, was thinking hard, and that he was obviously anxious to find out all he could about Rosenbaum's arrest and arrival in London. Was he trying to find a way, Wilson wondered, of getting at Rosenbaum, as he had sought to get at Pasquett, before Rosenbaum gave away to the police something he did not want them to know?

Wilson had just made up his mind to put his questions to Lord Ealing even in Bunker's presence, when there was another knock at the door, and the attendant showed in John Pasquett. Wilson shook hands, and introduced "General Bunker, head of the Special Branch." Then he said to Pasquett, "By the way, your mission is apparently at an end. The General has just told me he has arrested Rosenbaum."

Pasquett was still standing, but at these words he

sat down suddenly in the nearest chair. "Arrested Rosenbaum?" he said, and stared blankly at Wilson.

"Yes, at Liverpool," said Bunker. "He was trying to leave the country."

For a moment Pasquett said no more. Then he seemed to pull himself together. "Forgive me," he said. "I was struck all of a heap by what you said. It seemed too good to be true. . . . Is there any trace of Hugh Radlett?" he added anxiously.

"At present, Mr. Pasquett, we know only that the man has been arrested."

"Then you don't even know for certain whether poor Hugh is dead."

"This man brought a trunk back home on the day of the crime, and concealed it in an outhouse," said Bunker.

"You have searched it? Was Hugh's body——"

"We have not found it yet, Mr. Pasquett. But we shall. Having got the man——"

"At once," said Pasquett. "You must lose no time. Hugh may be still alive. General, I entreat you to lose no time."

Bunker at length agreed to send one of his men down to Streatham at once to make a further search, and left the room to arrange for this. Wilson seemed to cheer up immediately Bunker was out of the room. He took Pasquett into the inner room, to show him certain of the papers bearing on the case. Lord Ealing was left alone.

Yet another knock at the door, and the attendant showed in Arthur Wharton. Seeing his uncle alone, he expressed his surprise, and repeated in a low voice the apology he had already made in a brief note written

the night before for having revealed the fact that Lord Ealing had sent him to Warsaw.

"A pretty muddle you've made of things," said Lord Ealing. "I thought you had more sense."

"I couldn't tell the fellow a pack of lies," said Arthur.

"Why not?" said his uncle.

At this moment Wilson came back into the room, leaving Pasquett in the inner apartment, where he was going over the papers. "Ah," he said, "now I have you both together, there's one little matter I want you to clear up. You sent Mr. Wharton to Warsaw, I believe, to look for Mr. Pasquett?"

Lord Ealing nodded.

"How did you know Mr. Pasquett was in Warsaw?"

Lord Ealing smiled. "The answer is very simple, Wilson. I did not know. But Franklin remembered Radlett had said something about business in Warsaw, and it occurred to me that Mr. Pasquett might possibly be there. So, as I was sending Arthur there on business in any case, I told him to make a few inquiries. It did not seem worth while to mention the matter to you. I should have told you at once, of course, if anything had come of it."

"Nothing did, then?"

"Nothing at all. Pasquett had left Warsaw when Arthur arrived."

"Then you did not find him, Mr. Wharton?"

"No. I'm afraid I'm a bad sleuth," said Arthur. And he gave a brief account of his experiences.

"It's a pity you did not tell me of this, my lord," said Wilson. His manner was a plain "Don't let it happen again."

Lord Ealing changed the subject. "If Pasquett is still in the next room," he said, "I very much want my nephew to meet him. Shall we perform the introduction here?"

Wilson agreed, and the three men went into the adjoining room, where Pasquett, with his back towards them, was busy over Radlett's papers. He did not look round as they entered.

"Pasquett," said Lord Ealing, "I want to introduce to you my nephew, Arthur Wharton."

Arthur put his hand forward, and Pasquett turned round with outstretched hand. Then the two men each fell back and stared.

Arthur laughed. "Mr. Pasquett and I have met before," he said.

"Indeed we have," said Pasquett, "and I am delighted to renew the acquaintance."

"Where on earth have you managed to meet?" said Lord Ealing.

"Why, we were travelling companions all the way from Paris to Warsaw," said Arthur. "Do you know, Mr. Pasquett, I was hunting the world for you, and I was with you all that time without having an idea who you were."

Wilson struck in. "Do you say you travelled with Mr. Pasquett from Paris to Warsaw? When was that?"

"On the day following the discovery of the crime," said Arthur.

Wilson turned to Pasquett. "But I thought you were in Warsaw when the crime was committed?"

"Oh, no," said Pasquett. "I was in France—at Paramé, to be precise. I left for Warsaw, as Mr. Wharton says, the day after. Of course, I had heard

nothing of it, or I should have come to England at once."

"Where do you say you were, Mr. Pasquett?" asked Wilson. "I mean on the night of the crime."

"I was at Paramé," said Pasquett, "Paramé in Normandy. I was staying there with my friends, the Culpeppers."

"Culpepper? But he was in London."

"Yes. I was staying with Mrs. and Miss Culpepper."

"Why did you not tell me this before, Mr. Pasquett?"

"Upon my word, Superintendent, I hardly knew I had not. I had no idea you thought I was in Warsaw at the time of the murder. I had no idea it mattered where I was. I was only in Warsaw a few hours. Miss Culpepper saw me off at Paris."

"That was Miss Culpepper, was it?" said Arthur.

For the fourth time there was a knock at the door, and an attendant came in. "General Bunker's compliments, sir, and the prisoner 'as arrived, and 'e would like for you to come and see 'im with the other gentlemen, sir."

Wilson had been through a morning of surprises. He wanted time to think things over before he could readjust his mind. But Rosenbaum must be seen at once. "We will come," he said, and led the way down the corridor.

CHAPTER XIX

IN WHICH GENERAL BUNKER GETS HIMSELF INTO A PICKLE, AND SUPERINTENDENT WILSON MAKES A LITTLE TRIP TO FRANCE AND FINDS A CHARMING YOUNG LADY

The Special Branch of Scotland Yard was not destined so easily to solve the Radlett mystery, or to catch the elusive Rosenbaum. Wilson and those who accompanied him to General Bunker's room that morning were to remember that interview long afterwards and extract a hearty laugh from the remembrance. For Bunker's crypto-Jew turned out to be a Scotsman of irreproachable antecedents, his Bolshevik desperado a respectable merchant of sound Conservative principles and active in the South Streatham Lodge of the Primrose League. His name was not Rosenbaum, but, as he had said, Ivor Rose, and his partners, Lewis and Smith, were not Levi and Schmid, but the one a Welshman and the other a pure Cockney. Rose had a perfect alibi for the night of the crime, which he had spent attending a Wesleyan Conference in Birmingham. And, best of all, the mysterious trunk which he had brought home after the crime and "secreted" in an outhouse, proved to contain, not a dead or living body, but trade samples—of Poggins's Ideal Pickles for the Home—which the worthy merchant was conveying to the United States when Bunker's zealous emissaries arrested him at Liverpool. In short, Rose had to be

released, vowing vengeance on the Special Branch and all its works, and threatening to appeal to that prominent fellow-Wesleyan, the Member of Parliament for Streatham South. Not for the first time in its career, the Special Branch found itself badly bunkered.

On the day of Rose's release, John Pasquett set out for Glasgow, with excellent letters of introduction to the leaders of the Clyde Communists. He had discovered already that an agent of the Communist International was at present in Glasgow, and he told Wilson that he believed this man would prove to be Rosenbaum, although he passed under another name.

After the fiasco in Bunker's room, Wilson had set Blaikie again to work with renewed intensity. Bunker would still have the laugh of him, if he could get no nearer to a solution of the mystery. Blaikie therefore had an active time, but for a while nothing fresh rewarded his efforts. Meanwhile, Wilson kept puzzling his head about the extraordinary series of incidents which had taken place in his room before Bunker interrupted them with his "comic turn"—for so Wilson mentally described it.

Wilson recalled the scene. The news of Rosenbaum's arrest had been obviously a shock to Lord Ealing. And, when he had found out that Bunker had arrested the wrong man, his spirits had risen to the point of hilarity. It was now clearer than ever that Lord Ealing did not want Rosenbaum to be found.

Then there was Pasquett. He, too, had received the news of Rosenbaum's arrest in a very odd way. He had explained, it is true, that he was overcome by emotion at the thought that his friend's murderer had been brought to justice. But was this the real explanation? It would not do to forget that Pasquett stood

to get Radlett's money now he was out of the way. It was just conceivable he might have been Rosenbaum's accomplice, or even his instigator.

This thought had found reluctant lodgment in Superintendent Wilson's mind—for he was very much taken with Pasquett—before that most extraordinary occurrence of all. The mutual recognition of Pasquett and Arthur Wharton had then seemed suddenly to blow to nothing the whole of Pasquett's *alibi,* and to throw on him the direct suspicion of having misled the police as to where he had been at the time of the murder. Pasquett, if he had no *alibi,* might even be the murderer, or have been present when the deed was done.

He had asked Pasquett for an explanation, and it had been given, seemingly in the best of faith. What Pasquett had said was perfectly true. He had never told the police he had been in Warsaw when the crime was committed: they had simply concluded, because he came from Warsaw, that it was so. And he had stated quite naturally, when the question was asked—it ought, Wilson told himself, to have been asked much sooner—where he had been. Wilson determined to make the trip to Paramé himself, by way of confirming or disproving Pasquett's story.

Leaving Blaikie in charge in London, therefore, Wilson crossed to St. Malo, where he was within a few miles of Culpepper's seaside villa. He had said nothing to Culpepper of his intentions, as he wanted to reach the villa before Culpepper had told his wife and daughter that they might expect a visit from the police. From St. Malo a puffing steam tram ran out to Paramé. Wilson took this, and, descending at the terminus, asked the way to Culpepper's villa.

He found that the villa stood in an isolated spot, some three miles farther along the coast. He was in no great hurry, and set out to walk the distance, gradually leaving the scattered houses of the seaside resort behind him. Less than half an hour's walking brought him to the place. There were no cliffs at this point, only a slight rise of the land from the shelving beach, protected along its whole length by a vast number of upright stakes of all shapes and sizes driven into the sand. By the villa a small stream flowed out into the sea, and the house grounds were bordered one way by the beach, on which was a bathing shed, and another by the river. Strolling round to that side, Wilson saw a little boat-house just up the river and close against the side of the house.

After a good look round, he went to the front door, on the side away from the sea, and knocked. He heard voices inside, conversing in French, and after a minute a tall young woman opened the door. "Is Mr. Culpepper at home?" he asked, observing the woman with interest.

"My father is away," she said, "and mother is in town shopping. Can I be of any help?"

Norah Culpepper looked about thirty. Her dark hair, parted in the middle, was coiled away smoothly at the back of her head. The most noticeable features of her face were her strong Grecian nose and her large, dark, lustrous eyes. Besides these, her mouth was commonplace, but she had a quick, welcoming smile.

"I'll come in if I may," said Wilson, favourably impressed by her appearance. "Probably you can tell me what I want to know."

Norah Culpepper led the way into a bright sitting-room. Wilson noted her alert carriage and good

tailor-made tweeds as she preceded him into the room. An athletic young woman, as well as sensible, he decided.

"I had better tell you at once who I am," he said. "My name is Wilson—Superintendent Wilson of Scotland Yard." His words produced only a slightly puzzled look on Norah Culpepper's handsome face.

"I only want to ask you one or two simple questions," he went on, "about a friend of yours, Mr. John Pasquett."

"Oh, Jack," she said. "Nothing has happened to him, I hope," she added anxiously.

"Mr. Pasquett is quite well, and my questions are only a matter of form," said Wilson. "He tells me he spent the night of November 17th in this house with Mrs. Culpepper and yourself. I shall be obliged if you will tell me if that is so."

She thought for a moment. "Yes," she said at length. "I was thinking. It was on the afternoon of the 18th I drove him up to Paris. He left for Poland the next morning, and I came back here. He had been spending a long week-end with us. My father was away in London."

Wilson let out a deep breath. So Pasquett's *alibi* was all right, if this girl was speaking the truth. "Mr. Pasquett is an old friend of yours?" he asked.

"Of father's, yes. Mother and I have only known him about a year. Since father met him again in Paris. They were friends before in Russia."

"Have you heard from Mr. Culpepper lately?"

"Oh, yes. Mother heard about that dreadful affair of Mr. Radlett in London."

"You knew Mr. Radlett?"

"Only slightly. I had met him . . . in Paris. We have a flat there."

"I am sorry to seem inquisitve, Miss Culpepper, but you will understand all this is a matter of routine. Who else would be able to tell me for certain that Mr. Pasquett was here on the 17th and 18th?"

"Oh, mother would tell you, if she were in."

"What about your servants?"

"We only keep one here—Marie. And she sleeps out of the house. But she must have seen Jack here in the day-time. Would you care to see her?"

Wilson asked if he might go to the kitchen and have a few words with the servant, and Norah at once took him in and told Marie to answer any questions he chose to put. Marie was an old, shrunken, French peasant woman, very bright and clean, like everything that was visible in her shining kitchen. Wilson at once asked her in French when Pasquett had left. She counted on her fingers. "Ten days ago," she said. "It was Wednesday, after lunch."

"And was Mr. Pasquett here on the previous night?"

"But yes. He had been here for several days—since the Saturday before."

"Did you actually see him? Are you sure he was here on the night of Thursday?"

"But, monsieur, I am not here myself . . . at night. I left after preparing the dinner."

"You prepared dinner for Mr. Pasquett?"

"Yes, monsieur, and cleared away the things in the morning. . . . And Mr. Pasquett was here to breakfast, for I cleared away dirty breakfast things for three."

"Did you not see Mr. Pasquett in the morning?"

"No, monsieur. He had gone out early with mademoiselle. I do not come till after breakfast."

"That is so," said Norah. "We went out directly after breakfast."

"You saw Mr. Pasquett later in the day?" asked Wilson.

"Yes, monsieur. He was there when I came back from my shopping to prepare dinner. I saw him drive off with mademoiselle in the car."

Wilson heard the front door bang. "That will be mother," said Norah. "You will be able to see her now. Have you done with Marie?"

Wilson thanked Marie for her help, and followed Norah back to the sitting-room. There he found Mrs. Culpepper taking off her gloves and bonnet. She was a dried-up, faded woman. "Whatever is the matter, child?" she said. "Who is this gentleman?"

Wilson explained who he was, and said how kind Miss Culpepper had been in helping him. Mrs. Culpepper was a little inclined to ask why he needed to bother her, if he had got already the information he needed. But at length, somewhat ungraciously, she confirmed what Norah had said. Pasquett had been staying with them for some days before the 17th. He had spent the night of the 17th at the villa, and had left on the evening of the 18th for Paris with Norah, who had driven him in the car.

Wilson returned to London, feeling that, as he had expected, Pasquett's innocence seemed to be proved. The search for Rosenbaum must be pursued with new vigour. Perhaps by this time Pasquett had got on his track.

CHAPTER XX

IN WHICH A FRIENDSHIP PROCEEDS VERY RADIDLY, BUT SUPERINTENDENT WILSON HAS TO BE COMFORTED BY HIS WIFE

Arthur Wharton renewed his friendship with John Pasquett during the few days following his return to London. Pasquett hardly knew England, and it was Arthur's turn to act as guide. But Pasquett was, for the most part, in no mood to amuse himself. He liked Arthur's company, and they discussed many things together. Arthur knew that his friend—for so he had already learnt to think of Pasquett—was hard at work on the case, and once or twice he attempted to discuss with him the circumstances of Hugh Radlett's murder. But he found that Pasquett, though he would talk of nothing but the case to Wilson or Lord Ealing, was reluctant to discuss it with him. "No, Arthur," he said (they slipped quickly into calling each other by their Christian names), "don't talk to me about this horrible affair. I want to talk with you about other things. It helps my mind somehow." So they talked of all manner of things—of everything in heaven and earth—except the Radlett affair.

That was till Pasquett, in pursuit of a clue which he told Arthur he had picked up from a "comrade" in King Street, went to Glasgow. He believed, he said, that the mysterious Rosenbaum was, or had been,

there. Arthur missed him when he was gone. Lord Ealing, who had done all he could to encourage his nephew's friendship with Pasquett, laughed at him for mooning about like a girl that has lost her lover. Arthur first blushed, and then said that really he did feel a bit like that. "All the better, my boy," said Lord Ealing. "I only hope John Pasquett feels the same."

Time sped. A week had passed since Pasquett had turned detective, and beyond the fact that he had gone to Glasgow and was staying at the Central Hotel, following, as he told the police, a faint clue, the case had practically stood still. Further bills had been posted offering increased rewards to any person who could throw light on Rosenbaum's movements after he left Charing Cross Station, or offer any information that might lead to his apprehension. For several days these produced no result, save a further crop of persons whose evidence proved to be utterly worthless and untrustworthy. The police were quite in despair of getting any further clue, when at last two men came forward to say that to the best of their belief they had seen Rosenbaum—at least, a man of similar appearance—alight from a taxi at the door of 99 Grosvenor Walk, Chelsea, and, with the driver's help, carry a heavy trunk, answering the right description, into the house. The police then searched the house, which was empty, though furnished, and found marks in the thick dining-room carpet as if a trunk had been dragged in or out. But Blaikie could discover no other trace; nor could any one be found who had seen Rosenbaum or the trunk leave the house. An agent's board outside announced that it was to be let furnished for a few months. Inquiries at the agent's office brought a sur-

prising fact to light. On the afternoon before the crime, Hugh Radlett himself, giving the name of Restington, and Lord Ealing as a reference, had borrowed the keys, in order to look over the house on the following morning. He wanted, he said, a furnished house for a temporary residence in London. The keys had been returned through the post on the following day, and no more had been heard of Mr. Restington. The agent admitted that he ought to have informed the police of this, but the matter had seemed to him of no importance. He had not connected it in any way with Rosenbaum or with the murder.

So far the affair seemed clear enough. Radlett had meant to look over the house, and had told his secretary of his intention. Rosenbaum had then conceived the idea of taking his incriminating burden to the empty building. But what had he then done with it? Very likely he had taken advantage of being alone to disguise himself, and had left the house with a different appearance. But the trunk could not be discovered anywhere in the house; it must therefore have been taken away. But how? The trunk, rather than Rosenbaum's personal description, was now the clue to follow. But all inquiries failed to bring news of any one who had seen a man with a trunk, or indeed a man without one, leaving the house. There was, indeed, a back entrance into a little-frequented alley behind, and Rosenbaum could easily have slipped out unnoticed by that way. But he could not possibly have carried the trunk with him. It was too heavy to carry any distance without a vehicle, and the alley was only a footpath. Even if he had an accomplice, it would have been highly dangerous to carry it openly down the alley to the street. He must, therefore, have

left by the front way, but by bad luck the police could not get on his track. This was Blaikie's conclusion, and Superintendent Wilson had to admit that he was probably right.

But Wilson was not satisfied. He made up his mind to see for himself. The whole house had already been turned topsy-turvy by the police in their search for the trunk, but still it was just possible they might have missed it. There was a curious piece of evidence which made him suspect that somewhere the trunk, with its gruesome contents, must be still in the house. A firm of furniture warehousers—Hollis's in King's Cross Road—came forward and stated that, on the day before the crime, they had received a letter, type-written and signed "John Smith," asking them to call at ten o'clock on the following morning at 99 Grosvenor Walk, in order to fetch away a package to be warehoused. John Smith, who gave his address as 99 Grosvenor Walk, said that they must call punctually at ten o'clock, as he was leaving town and the house was being locked up at that hour. He enclosed £3 in Treasury notes to cover warehousing expenses for a year, and asked that any balance should be retained to cover future charges. Hollis's carman had duly called, but there had been no reply to his knocks, and he had gone away. A letter written by the firm to John Smith had been returned through the post marked "not known." John Smith's letter, Wilson found, had undoubtedly been typed on the typewriter found in Radlett's rooms.

This was a curious circumstance. It looked to the Superintendent as if Rosenbaum had meant to put the trunk and its contents away, for the time—at least, until he had got securely away—in Hollis's depository. But, as he had not done this, he must have found some

better way of disposing of it. What if he had, after all, hidden it somewhere in the house?

Wilson went to Grosvenor Walk. Where could a man hide a trunk in a furnished house so that it would escape the expert searching of the police? Under the floor? The floorboards had already been taken up. He might have chopped it up small and hidden it somewhere; but then what had become of its contents? It was a bulky and a heavy object that needed hiding.

He searched long from roof to cellar before he hit on Rosenbaum's plan. At last he noticed a possible hiding-place. The stairs came down in a curve from the first landing to the ground floor, and the basement stairs ran under these in an opposite curve. Cupboards occupied the space under the basement stairs, full of household crockery; but the space under the lower stairs of the flight leading to the first landing was boarded over. It was a useless space, well over Wilson's head as he descended the basement stairs. The boarding looked quite natural, corresponding to the panelling which lined the walls all the way down. But, on climbing up, Wilson saw that some of the boards had been recently removed and replaced. The marks of recent, and hasty, nailing were plainly to be seen.

Within a few minutes he had the boards down, and was rewarded by a sight he had hardly dared to expect. Inside was the trunk, wedged into a space just big enough to hold it. With some difficulty he drew it out, but, as he did so, a sharp feeling of disappointment swept over him. It was too light: it was empty.

Carrying it up to the ground floor, he opened it. There was nothing at all inside. But on the bottom was a biggish bloodstain, and there were spots of dry

blood on other parts of the lining. The body, then, had been in the trunk. But where was the body, now? And how, in heaven's name, had Rosenbaum managed to walk off in broad daylight with a dead body, leaving behind the trunk which had concealed it from view?

"Worse and worse," thought Wilson. The more one discovered, the worse became the confusion of the case. But suppose Radlett had not been dead, after all. Suppose Rosenbaum had packed him up in the trunk, alive and drugged. And suppose he had got him to the house, and there revived him. Bah! That didn't make sense either. For in that case it meant that Radlett had quietly walked off with the man who had wounded and drugged him, and had then completely disappeared. Such an idea was merely fantastic.

No. The body, like the trunk, must surely be hidden somewhere in the house. Wilson 'phoned to Scotland Yard for help, and an even more energetic search began. There would be a pretty bill for compensation to the absent owners by the time the police had done pulling the place about. The search was now even extended to the neighbouring houses on each side, in case Rosenbaum might have been aided by an accomplice in disposing of the body. But the outraged householders of 101 and 97 Grosvenor Walk seemed to be quite above suspicion. The most meticulous search revealed nothing further at all.

Superintendent Wilson returned to Scotland Yard from this abortive body-hunt to find a wire from Pasquett awaiting him. "On R.'s track," it ran. "Has been here. Leaving for Aberdeen after him. Pasquett." He at once put through a trunk call to

the Aberdeen police, telling them to be on the look-out for Rosenbaum, and to give Pasquett any help he wanted. And he determined to send Inspector Blaikie at once to Aberdeen with orders to get directly into touch with Pasquett and bring Rosenbaum to London if he could be found. Then he waited for news with what patience he could muster.

It came on the following day, in the form of a wire from Blaikie. "R. escaped. Returning at once with P. to report." And, on the next morning, Pasquett and Inspector Blaikie told him their story.

"I began," said Pasquett, "as you know, by getting myself into the confidence of the Bolshevik fellows down here. That was easy enough, I found, where I showed them letters from Lenin, and a few other things like that. Then I told them I was going to Glasgow, offered to do some speaking up there, and got introductions to the local 'comrades.' In Glasgow I got on Rosenbaum's track by a pure stroke of luck. The fellows there, seeing my introductions, thought I was a real 'comrade,' on a secret mission from Russia—I made them think that—and I told them I had to get in touch with a man from the Third International who was also in this country. They said, did I mean Hetherington? I drew a bow at a venture, and said I did, though, of course, that wasn't his real name. In conversation, I soon made sure he was our man. They said he had gone to Aberdeen, on his way back to Russia. You can be sure I scuttled after him at full speed, and got the Aberdeen police on his track. They had just had your message, and did all they could to help. Well, to cut a long story short, we found this chap had started, a week before I got there, on a Russian

timber ship belonging to the Soviet Government. He was shipped as a member of the crew—the ship had gone straight to Cronstadt. Of course, we made inquiries about where she was; but it seems that, barring accidents, she's in port by now, and Rosenbaum's safe back somewhere in Russia. Not much chance of getting at him there, I'm afraid?"

"Very little, I fear. You see, Russia's not recognised. Of course, we can make unofficial representations, but they will only swear they've never heard of him, I expect."

"So that's that, is it?" Pasquett sighed. "If only I'd been here sooner," he said. "But, you see, I knew nothing about it. I came at once when I knew."

"It's not your fault, Mr. Pasquett. You have done wonders in getting on his track. It is our people who have let him slip through their fingers. And what we've found out while you've been away doesn't help us now the fellow's gone."

Wilson then gave Pasquett an account of the discovery of the trunk, and of the careful search they had made for the body. Pasquett listened, clutching the table before him. "My God," he said, "does it mean Hugh's alive? It must mean that. This villain's carried him off."

Wilson explained the strong objection to such a view of the case. "No," he said, "I fear it means that Rosenbaum somehow got out of the house with the body, and disposed of it. How, I confess I don't know. It's not in the house. Our search has been absolutely exhaustive."

"It can't rest there, Superintendent. Look here. I offer a reward of £10,000, or more, if you like, for the discovery of the body, or of Hugh Radlett himself, if

he's still alive. I can't bear not knowing. You've got so far, you must be able to find out more."

. . . . . .

But there the case ended. Pasquett's offer of £10,000 reward was given the widest publicity, and brought in many people who thought they had information to offer. Rosenbaum was reported to have been seen in a dozen places: half a dozen persons were detained on false suspicions, and had to be released. Unofficial representations were made in Moscow, but the Soviet authorities blandly denied that any such person as Rosenbaum had been on a mission to England with their knowledge, or that they had any means of laying hands on the man, if he existed at all. Pasquett, after an attempt, through Lord Ealing, to stir the Foreign Office to action, finally gave up the struggle, and consented to talk business again with Lord Ealing and with a member of the firm of lawyers who were Radlett's agents. The lawyer had come over on purpose from New York, and he and Mr. Franklin were closeted for long hours with Pasquett, who spent other busy hours in the offices of the Anglo-Asiatic Corporation. The business of the concession was seriously resumed, with no change of plan, except that John Pasquett had stepped into Radlett's shoes.

. . . . . .

"The most bothersome case I ever had in my life," said Wilson to Mrs. Wilson on the evening of the day when he had finally given up hope, and sent the papers away to be filed.

"Yes, dear," said his wife. "Would you like to tell me about it?"

"Oh, it's no use, I'm afraid. Even you can't help me this time. All the same, I should like to try to sort it out in my mind before I put it away for good.

"It's like this, my dear. This man Radlett came to stay with his secretary at Sugden's Hotel. Early in the morning, the secretary, who had ordered a taxi the night before, went away with a large trunk. Lord Ealing arrived to breakfast with Radlett, but when they went to find him all they found at first was an empty room with bloodstains and traces of a struggle all over the place."

"Did they never find the body?"

"No; but when they searched the secretary's bedroom they found an absurd little man called Culpepper bound and gagged in a cupboard. He said he had seen the murderer actually with the body in his arms, when he was carrying it so as to pack it up in the trunk. Rosenbaum threatened Culpepper with a revolver, and made him—he's a miserable little creature—help him pack up the body. Then he drugged Culpepper and tied him up."

"How did this man Culpepper come to be there in the middle of the night, dear?"

"Oh, he was a friend of Radlett's who had been there in the evening. He had missed his last train home, and Radlett had given him a shake-down on the sofa. That was after Rosenbaum had gone to bed, so that he had no idea Culpepper was there."

"Who was Culpepper? What sort of man, I mean?"

"He's a merchant in a middling way of business. He lives in Paris. He's a friend of Pasquett's, too. Pasquett was staying in France with his wife and daughter when it happened. He was in London on

business. Fine girl, his daughter. I went over and saw her."

"Then this man Culpepper actually saw the murderer pack the body in the trunk."

"Yes, helped him do it. Then this Rosenbaum—who turned out, by the way, to be a notorious Bolshevik agitator, who had somehow got into Radlett's confidence, having murdered his employer——"

"I suppose Culpepper was sure the man was dead."

"He said he was sure. But, of course, it's not absolutely certain. It's just possible this Rosenbaum drugged Radlett, and carried him off alive. But I don't think so. He'd have turned up by now in that case, unless he killed him afterwards. What I want to know is why on earth the fellow ever took the body away. It doesn't make sense."

"Could he have wanted the body for anything?"

"Nothing I can conceive. If you can think of a plausible reason I won't despair of the case. I just can't think of one."

"Perhaps he meant you to believe Radlett had only disappeared."

"In that case, he ought to have removed the other traces of the crime. But he didn't. However, he may have meant to do so, and not had time. Well, then we had the devil of a job tracing Rosenbaum and his infernal trunk all over London. At last, we tracked him to a house in Chelsea, and there, in the end, I found the trunk, with bloodstains in it, but empty."

"You didn't find the body?"

"No. It had clean vanished, and so had the man.

Then this chap Pasquett, who was Radlett's partner and was in France at the time of the murder—I've confirmed that; been out myself to make sure—did a bit of private detecting on his own, and got on Rosenbaum's track, only to find that he had sailed for Russia from Aberdeen in a Russian vessel."

"What a pity. But wasn't it very clever of Mr. Pasquett to find him out at all?"

"Yes; he did very well, but, unfortunately, he was too late. The fellow had got clean away."

"Mr. Radlett was very rich, was he not?"

"Immensely—he was a millionaire a good many times over."

"Who gets his money, my dear?"

"Oh, Pasquett gets pretty nearly all of it. You mean, I suppose, that he had the motive."

"Well, hadn't he?"

"Certainly; but he was in France when it happened; and, besides, there's no reasonable doubt this fellow Rosenbaum did it."

"I suppose Mr. Pasquett did really trace Rosenbaum to Aberdeen. Could he not have just pretended to trace him? So as to put you off the track?"

"No, that's impossible. We have proved positively that Rosenbaum was in Aberdeen. Quite apart, I mean, from Pasquett's evidence. At least, there was a Bolshie agitator there who got away clean to Russia, and we proved he had used the name Rosenbaum and been in London before he went to Scotland. He called himself 'Hetherington' after the crime."

"Could Mr. Pasquett have bribed Rosenbaum to kill Mr. Radlett, and then have helped him to get out of the country?"

"No. Impossible. He didn't get to Aberdeen till

a week after Rosenbaum had left. No, my dear, I've given all possible weight to the suggestion that, since Pasquett profits by the crime, he may have instigated it. But there's not a shadow of an imputation that points to Pasquett. Besides, I've seen the man, and I'll stake my reputation he's no murderer—directly or indirectly. He was really fond of Radlett. No, if you had met Pasquett, you would be as sure as I am."

"Then, dear, I suppose you're quite right to give the case up. This man Rosenbaum did it, and he's got away."

"Yes; but how the devil did he get rid of the body? He didn't leave it at that house in Chelsea, and I don't see how he could have taken it away from there. Of course, we didn't trace him there directly, so he may have got rid of it before that. But how? And why did he keep the trunk after he got rid of the body? There's a mystery there, and we haven't got to the bottom of it. I suppose we never shall."

"I'm sorry, dear. I know you don't like being beaten. But it's time for bed. You must try to put the whole thing out of your mind."

Wilson obediently tried, but he lay long awake, turning the case over and trying to make the parts fit. Blaikie, on the other hand, slept peacefully enough. Unsolved riddles of justice annoyed him, and he did not like being beaten any better than his superior. But he did not lose sleep over it.

PART II

CHAPTER XXI

IN WHICH THE CITY'S DOUBTS ARE RESOLVED, AND TWO FRIENDS START FOR SIBERIA

Anglo-Asiatics were booming. Not merely had they recovered from their recent slump; they had leapt up to the top of the market; and were still soaring. There was a positive scramble in the City to get hold of them. Those who had held on during the slump praised God and bought a new motor-car, or planned to move into larger houses, or buy a bigger place in the country: those who had sold out cursed their luck, and prophesied that, despite the boom, the Anglo-Asiatic Corporation would come to a bad end. Few heeded their prophecies: the City was as optimistic about Anglo-Asiatics now as it had been pessimistic a brief while ago. Vanzetti might go about black as a thunder-cloud, and curse Lord Ealing for not giving him the tip. All Lord Ealing answered was, "My dear fellow, I never advised you to sell. I told you I was holding on. And I knew no more than you how it would turn out."

All this, of course, was since Pasquett had at length publicly signified his intention of taking up the great Siberian concession jointly with Lord Ealing and his associates. But this was not the only cause for jubilation. It appeared that, now the concession had been taken up and guarantees given, the Soviet Government

was prepared to treat the Anglo-Asiatic very generously in respect of its other properties in Russia. Not one concession, but several, were in prospect, and it was already certain that the Anglo-Asiatic's proposed issue of fresh capital would be heavily over-subscribed. Every one wanted to be in it. Pasquett's holding back, and then coming forward when the shares were nearly worthless, had produced the maximum of effect. The City is extraordinarily susceptible to influences of this sort.

Pasquett, after his final interview with Supterintendent Wilson, seemed to have given up hope of catching Rosenbaum. He had gone straight to Lord Ealing, and taken up his quarters at that nobleman's fine house in Berkeley Square. There they had, after dinner on the evening of Pasquett's return, their first business conversation, apart from the little talk we have noted already.

"Well, Pasquett," said Lord Ealing, as they sat together over their wine, "is the ban lifted? May I talk business now?"

"By all means," said Pasquett. "Since I'm coming in, it can't be done too soon."

Thereafter the two men had speedily settled the broad outlines of their plan, including the methods to be used in raising the new capital required. Pasquett said he would go out at once with Arthur Wharton and the expert appointed by the Anglo-Asiatic to survey the ground and make the necessary preparations. The financial arrangements at home he would leave in the hands of his lawyer and of Mr. Culpepper, whom, in view of Radlett's death, he proposed to make his partner in the enterprise. Lord Ealing readily agreed to these suggestions, and, between them, they worked

out a complete plan for submission to the leaders of the Anglo-Asiatic. There was to be a new company, with a composite Board of four—Lord Ealing and Sir James Vanzetti, Pasquett and Culpepper. Lord Ealing was to be Chairman, and Pasquett, Managing Director. Franklin was to be solicitor to the Board, and Pasquett agreed that Arthur Wharton should be appointed as secretary to the new company. An essential feature of the scheme was that full and immediate publicity was to be given, both to the terms of the concession, and to the advantages secured by the Anglo-Asiatic in respect of its other Russian properties. In the unlikely event of Radlett being alive, he would, of course, join the Board, and little Mr. Benjamin was to be added in order to equalise the representation of the two groups.

A glow of satisfaction came over Lord Ealing as they talked. He could see that Pasquett had his business head screwed on the right way, and would make an admirable partner. And he was confident that Pasquett had no inkling of the little scheme by which he had already realised quite a fortune.

It was when everything was settled that Pasquett said carelessly, "By the way, I hope you did pretty well out of that little affair we arranged here when we first met."

Lord Ealing stared, and sat up suddenly. "What do you mean?" he said. "I don't understand."

"I mean," said Pasquett, laughing, "that it was a cute move, getting people to think I wasn't coming in, and bringing the shares down so that you could buy them cheap, without any one knowing. And I'm glad you didn't tell Vanzetti. I understand he was selling hard. It would have been a pity to bring him into it."

"Really, Pasquett, I don't know what you're driving at."

"My dear Lord Ealing," said Pasquett pleasantly, "you and I are going to be partners, and it is best we should understand one another fully. You got me to promise you I would come in, and you were very particular I should not tell any one else. Then the rumour was very well spread that I was not coming in. Such a rumour was clearly calculated to cause a fall in the price of your shares. Very well . . . the shares did fall. Isn't the inference obvious? You were buying when they were down. I spotted your game as soon as you didn't want me to tell. And, when the shares began to rise in spite of the rumour, it was clear as daylight you were buying. Now, wasn't it?"

Lord Ealing looked at Pasquett and sighed. "I give in," he said. "You're quite right. Between ourselves, I was buying."

"My dear chap, so was I. And if you've done as well as I have, you have nothing to complain of."

Lord Ealing gasped. "You were the other buyer?" he said. "And I never had an idea you suspected."

Pasquett laughed. "Well, there's no harm done," he said. "We've both made a tidy bit of money by it, and now we understand each other. Two very desirable things."

"But I imagined you were far too much concerned about Radlett to think of business."

Pasquett became serious at once. "I was cut up, thoroughly cut up," he said, "but it wasn't in human nature to let you have a little game like that all to yourself."

"So that's why the shares rose a bit. You and I were buying against each other."

"That's so. But we've both done well enough not to complain. Shake hands on it."

Lord Ealing shook hands, but he felt—humbled. This unknown man had seen through his astute game at a glance, and had the audacity to welcome him as a brother swindler. Well, it wasn't quite swindling; but it was sharp practice. He would need all his wits in dealing with Pasquett. But, after all, that made him all the better as a partner. Thenceforward, Lord Ealing thought of Pasquett as his business equal. There were few men of whom he would admit as much.

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The flotation of the new company, and all the other preliminaries connected with the concession, took longer than either Pasquett or Lord Ealing had anticipated, and several months passed before Pasquett was ready to start on his journey to Siberia. There were Radlett's affairs in New York to be cleared up, and ready money to be made available for the work of development. Pasquett's presence, and frequent exercise of his power of attorney, was indispensable, and he had even to pay a flying visit to the United States in order to place some of Radlett's assets in a more liquid form and comply with certain legal formalities. When he returned, one of the partners in the New York firm of lawyers which had served Radlett accompanied him, partly on business, but also with the intention, as he put it, of seeing little Europe (with the accent on the final syllable) while he was about it. There were many consultations in Franklin's office, countless papers to be signed, endless and irritating legal delays.

The actual proving of Radlett's will was, indeed,

deferred until the mystery surrounding his death was either solved or given up as insoluble. But the power of attorney gave Pasquett ample scope, and he had already realised a substantial sum for himself by his fortunate purchases of Anglo-Asiatic shares. There was no lack of ready money, and, though the formalities were sometimes annoying, they did not seriously hold back the progress of the concession.

The delays in getting the legal business of the concession settled up gave Pasquett an opportunity of developing his knowledge, personal as well as commercial, of his new associates. He made, as we have seen, an excellent first impression, but he also improved on further acquaintance. He was no longer staying with Lord Ealing in Berkeley Square, having been lucky enough to rent a large and comfortable furnished flat in the Adelphi, with big windows overlooking the river. There he entertained quietly, rapidly building himself up a body of friends who were enthusiastic in his praise.

He made one enemy—Vanzetti. The big man never forgave him for the rebuff administered at their first meeting. Vanzetti had lost heavily through selling out at the worst time a big block of his shares in the Anglo-Asiatic, and he had somehow conceived the idea—not so far from the truth, as we know—that Pasquett had deliberately forced the shares down in order to buy when they were cheap, and that this had been the reason for his refusal to come to terms sooner with the directors of the Anglo-Asiatic. Vanzetti had never seriously suspected Lord Ealing of having invented this little plot. Nor did he now. But he did suspect Pasquett, and hated him for it. Pasquett did his best to charm Vanzetti by putting out all his powers

to please, but, though the big man was polite for business reasons, his dislike of Pasquett was hardly concealed. Lord Ealing tried to laugh him out of it in vain. He returned again and again to his grievance about the sale of his shares, though, with the subsequent rise of values, he stood to gain by what he had held more than enough to balance his loss.

Arthur Wharton, who suspected nothing of the little wangles out of which Pasquett and his uncle had done so well, saw a good deal of Pasquett during these months of waiting, and the two men became fast friends. Whenever the Canadian was in London, he and Arthur were inseparable. They corresponded during his absence in the United States, and Arthur became his confidant in the matter which shared his heart with the affairs of the Anglo-Asiatic.

Little Mr. Culpepper, as we know, had a daughter. Wilson, when he went to Paramé, had been struck as much by her beauty as by her obvious capacity and self-possession. Arthur had actually seen Norah Culpepper for a few minutes, without knowing who she was, on the occasion when he and Pasquett were fellow-travellers by air from Paris to Warsaw. He had been struck with her even then, and now he heard a great deal of Norah Culpepper from his new friend, and he was not surprised when, after one of his many week-end visits to the Culpepper villa at Paramé, Pasquett announced that he and Norah had made a match of it. John Pasquett laughed at himself as he told Arthur the news. "An old bachelor like me," he said, "ought to have no business getting engaged."

"You seem very pleased about it, all the same, my baby-snatcher," said Arthur, "and I must tell you I'm not a bit surprised. You've thought of nothing

but Norah Culpepper and the concession ever since I got to know you. I wonder which you love the more."

"Norah, of course," said Pasquett; but who knows whether he spoke the truth? "She's just the wife for me," he said. "She'll enjoy this Siberian business as much as I shall."

"Are you taking her with you?" asked Arthur, secretly a little alarmed at the prospect of female companionship on their expedition.

"Not this time," said Pasquett. "I must get things ready for her first. I'll come back and get married in a few months, and then bring her out with me. She wants to come. How's that for a wife?"

"Magnificent!" said Arthur. "Will you introduce me to the charmer? Our first meeting hardly constitutes an introduction."

The next time Pasquett went to Paramé he took Arthur with him, and gave him the opportunity of getting to know the girl whose looks and carriage he had so admired when she saw Pasquett off from Paris on the day following the discovery of the crime. Arthur spent a very pleasant week-end at Paramé. Culpepper himself was away in London, greatly to Arthur's relief, for he neither liked nor trusted the little man. But he did like Norah very much, though he told Pasquett that he found it difficult to make her out. He had proof of her courage during his stay. The chief ornament of the Culpepper villa was a magnificently-equipped motor-boat, very fast and seaworthy, and obviously Norah's hobby and delight. In this, on the Sunday, they made a long trip, visiting Mont St. Michel and other places along the coast, and running far out to sea. It came on very rough, and Arthur was seriously

alarmed, especially when a heavy fog descended on them. But Norah Culpepper seemed to enjoy the fog and the heavy sea. Danger was her element. Arthur forgot his fears in marvelling at the skill with which she handled her boat, assuming naturally the position of captain, and ordering him and Pasquett about with a perfect command of the situation. Arthur was glad when at last, well after nightfall, they got back to Paramé. From that moment he regarded Norah as a somewhat formidable young woman—as formidable as she was charming and clever. He said as much to Pasquett.

"Lord bless you, yes," said his friend. "She'll boss me, though I flatter myself I have a will of my own too. I like her for it. I can't abide the clinging kind of young lady, who looks up to you for protection and expects to be kept like a pet dog."

Arthur was rather amused at the lovers when he watched them together. They did not behave like lovers of the conventional sort. He had rather feared, when he accepted Norah's invitation, issued in her mother's name, that he would be in the way, and that Pasquett would want to be alone with her. But he soon found out his mistake. Their idea of love-making was to do things together. They spent half Saturday building a summer-house in the garden, while Arthur patiently fetched and carried at Norah's command. In the evening they went across the river to Dinard, and made merry at the Casino. But not for a moment did Arthur feel that he was in the way, or that they wished him elsewhere. They were like three good friends together. When they went back to London on Monday, Norah seriously proposed running them right across the Channel in her motor-boat, but Pasquett

dissuaded her. "I often do it, you know, Mr. Wharton," she said. Arthur could not make out the look that passed from Pasquett to her as she said this. He seemed to be warning her not to say more. When Arthur expressed his astonishment that she should venture to cross the sea in an open boat, she abruptly changed the subject. No more was said of her proposal to take them across to England. But it remained in Arthur's mind.

Alfred Culpepper himself was much in London during these months, but his wife and daughter preferred to remain in France, occasionally at their flat in Paris, but for the most of the time at Paramé. Culpepper told Arthur that he had urged them to come and take a house with him in London, but Norah absolutely refused, and Mrs. Culpepper always did what her daughter commanded. So Culpepper passed much of his time with his sister in London, though he still kept his Paris business in being. This was only a small affair, but he had ideas of developing it, in connection with the new company—the Anglo-Yenisei—which could be so worked as to throw a deal of fresh trade in his way.

So Pasquett went to and fro between France and London, and between his two loves—Norah and the concession. Arthur paid other visits with him later, both to Paramé and to Paris, and got to know Norah Culpepper well. He liked her the more the better he knew her, but he never lost his impression that she was both essentially formidable and a little mysterious. Pasquett laughed when he called her mysterious. "What you mean," he said, "is that she's like no one else in the world. That's why I'm going to marry her."

Arthur's friendship with Pasquett was growing all this time firmer and closer. He found in his new friend a satisfaction of impulses and aspirations of his own that had never become articulate. In Oxford, he had protected himself with a veneer of cynical comment against the sense of boredom and unprofitable security which the life of the University gave him. He had left Oxford and entered the service of the Anglo-Asiatic in search of he hardly knew what, but certainly of adventure in some form. Modern business, he had told himself, was a piratical filibustering affair; in it he would surely find an outlet for his buccaneering instincts. But a few months had convinced him that the business world was as dull as the academic, and that there was no romance to be found even in the tangled financial operations of his uncle's company.

Arthur envied Pasquett his capacity for getting a savour out of everyday affairs. When he talked of his doings in Russia, the spirit of adventure came to life in every tale. But no less when he talked of ordinary business concerns, Pasquett seemed to extract from them, too, an essence of romantic enjoyment. He was, and was conscious of being, a born adventurer, a man who would never settle down. Even Radlett's millions would not turn him into an ordinary, humdrum capitalist, content to sit at home and manipulate high finance while his subordinates did the actual work of setting men to production. Pasquett was eager to get back to Siberia, and himself to take the lead in getting the concession under weigh. He would manage the affair with excellent business capacity. Arthur was sure of that. But he would also enjoy managing it, enjoy the inevitable hardships and difficulties, and

enjoy, above all, carrying the whole thing off with a swing.

It was because he found in Pasquett qualities hitherto latent in himself that Arthur was eager to accept his leadership and to make him a friend. They made their preparations for their journey together to Siberia like two friends arranging for a pleasant travel. Sandy Alison, chief mining expert of the Anglo-Asiatic, who was to go with them, poked his dry fun at them again and again. The little, stocky, middle-aged Scotsman, with his Glasgow accent and his queer, humorous ways, would remind them very solemnly that it was not a picnic on which they were bound, but a great business expedition. "Ye'll need," he would say, "to hae a mind to the widows and orphans who ha' pu' their bit of money into yon concession." According to him, they were behaving like a pair of children, quite unfit to be trusted with great business affairs.

They knew, however, that Alison was looking forward to the expedition just as keenly as they. He had begun his career as a miner in the Australian goldfields, and there had been no dearth of adventures in his earlier life. Once, growing confidential, he told them that he had been rusting at home for years, and was spoiling for a job with a spice of excitement to it. But usually he maintained a dour, critical attitude, betraying himself only by a twinkle in the eye and an occasional phrase of dry humour. "Amn't I promising Lord Ealing to be a father to you," he would say, "and keep ye both out of mischief? I'll hae my hands full, ye say? I will that."

At length all was ready for a start. A ship was fitted out with an abundant supply of tools and machinery required for the first processes of development. As

early in the year as the passage was likely to be clear of ice, the three men, with a good company of skilled subordinates, sailed from Aberdeen for the River Yenisei, by way of the Kara Sea. They had chosen the all-sea route in order to avoid the complications of overland travel across Europe with their heavy equipment. Lord Ealing and Culpepper saw them off at Aberdeen.

CHAPTER XXII

IN WHICH AN INCONSIDERATE RUSSIAN RAISES A GHOST

The voyage was uneventful. After some delays, the *Arbiter,* in which Pasquett and his companions sailed, found safe passage round North Cape and got through the Kara Strait and the dangerous sea beyond without being once ice-bound or suffering a single misadventure. It was a warm spring, and the passage had cleared early in the year. The *Arbiter* anchored in the mouth of the Yenisei River well before her time, and had several days' waiting before the arrival of the river steamer and barges to which she was to transfer her cargo.

A voyage, in a ship carrying few passengers, is a testing time for human friendships. But the three leaders of the expedition had no quarrels, and never once became bored with one another's society. All three had excellent tempers, and plenty to say. The friendship between Arthur and John Pasquett ripened into close affection.

From the time when they arrived in the river there was plenty of occupation, for the business of convoying the barges up the river, past a dozen difficult points, with quite inadequate charts and an awkward cargo, demanded all their attention. Alison as well as Pasquett could speak Russian, and most of the work therefore devolved on them. Arthur had already set himself

to learn the language before leaving England, but he found it hard to get into the way of talking it fluently, and few of the Russians he had to deal with could speak either French or German.

At length they reached the area of the concession, a barren tract some distance above Lusino, populated only by a few nomadic tribesmen, save for a deserted monastery, which they occupied as a headquarters. At once Pasquett and Alison, using the old notes compiled by Pasquett and Radlett some years before, began a full survey of the area, verifying every particular, and proving up to the hilt the eminently satisfactory forecasts which Pasquett had made. It was Arthur's business, meanwhile, to superintend, with the skilled men they had brought out, the erection of the camp, and to make full and regular reports of progress to Lord Ealing. It was also his task, with Pasquett, to conduct the necessary negotiations with the Soviet representatives on the points of detail which were constantly arising.

At length, the whole of the survey was complete, and preliminary mining operations definitely begun. But, before the work could be extended, it was necessary to clear up a number of points connected with the supply and conditions of labour. It became evident that one of them must make the long journey to Moscow, in order to conclude a subsidiary agreement with the central Soviet authorities.

Pasquett was clearly the man best fitted, as an original holder of the concession, and the most familiar with Russian conditions, for this task, and it was soon decided that he should go. Arthur had some thoughts of making the journey with him, but his presence at the workings seemed to be indispensable, as Alison

could not be left to manage everything alone. So Pasquett went. Arthur missed him greatly, though he had too much to do to find time for being bored.

It was during Pasquett's absence that a very odd thing happened. Arthur had by this time learnt to speak Russian fluently—far better than Alison, who was a bad linguist, would ever speak it. So much of the dealing with outsiders, including the local Soviet authorities, fell into his hands. He had charge, too, of the provisioning of the camp, under an arrangement with the Co-operative Societies which flourish in Siberia. The odd thing arose out of a visit from an agent of one of these societies, from whom Arthur was purchasing a big consignment of meat.

The business being concluded, Arthur and the agent fell into talk. The man was an old Russian from Petrograd, formerly a political exile, who had settled down permanently in Siberia and been one of the pioneers of Siberian Co-operation. Pasquett's name came up in the course of their conversation. Arthur mentioned that the leader of their party, John Pasquett, was away in Moscow.

"I came across a John Pasquett," said the agent, "some time ago, when I was down in Turkestan. I wonder if your friend is any relation of his."

"I expect it was the man himself," said Arthur. "Mr. Pasquett has spent many years in Siberia."

The old man shook his head. "No," he said, "the John Pasquett I mean died two years ago. Is Pasquett a common name in your country?"

"I never met it until I was introduced to Mr. Pasquett. A most uncommon name, I should say. You must be mistaken."

"No. I remember the circumstances well. John

Pasquett had been imprisoned in Turkestan, under suspicion of being a counter-revolutionary."

"Why," said Arthur, "it's the same man. He has told me all about it. But he's very far from being dead, I assure you."

"My John Pasquett died," said the Russian. "I know, because I signed his death certificate. I was a Soviet Commissary in Turkestan at the time."

"Well, all I can say is John Pasquett is very much alive now. I don't think I ever met any one who was more alive."

"He was with an American named Radlett," said the Russian. "They were both in prison together, and they both escaped. Radlett, I believe, got clean away in the end. I heard of his being in Moscow afterwards. But Pasquett died of exposure up on the Pamir Plateau. He was trying to get away to India."

"You've got half the story right," said Arthur. "Only they did both get away. They were both living in Reval till a few months ago."

"And you say Pasquett has been here with you?"

"Yes. The government granted this concession to him and Radlett, and my firm took it up jointly with him. Mr. Pasquett is at the head of it now, since Radlett's death."

"Radlett is dead, then?"

"He was murdered in London a few months ago."

"But Pasquett is alive. No, Mr. Wharton, there is something wrong here. Let me tell you exactly what I know."

The old Russian had a perfectly circumstantial tale to tell. Pasquett and Radlett had planned to escape together from prison. Pasquett had got away, but Radlett had been recaptured. He had allowed him-

self to be taken in order to enable his friend to make good his escape. So far the story tallied with Radlett's own narrative, told in the manuscript which had been found among his papers. Then, a while later, Radlett had also escaped, with help from outside, rendered by Pasquett, who had remained in the neighbourhood, instead of making for India. The two men had then got away clear to the mountains. A week later a peasant had delivered at the prison a note which had been given to him by a man he had met up in the mountains. It was from Radlett. The note said that Pasquett had died of exposure, and asked the prison authorities to give his body burial. Radlett explained in the note where the body was to be found, and said that he himself would be safe in India before the news could reach them. A search party had gone up the hills and buried Pasquett's body, bringing back the few things found at the camp, including Pasquett's clothes. He himself had seen the clothes, and other effects, and had countersigned the certificate of death drawn up by the prison doctor.

"You never actually saw the body?" asked Arthur.

"No; but my friend Dr. Borsin, who accompanied the expedition, saw it, and certified that it was his."

"Did Dr. Borsin know Pasquett?"

"He knew all the prisoners."

"Yet I can swear to you that Pasquett is alive."

"It is no business of mine, but may it not be that the gentleman who now calls himself Pasquett is some one quite different?"

Arthur laughed at the suggestion as absurd. "I'll ask Pasquett to tell me what happened when he gets back," he said. "He'll be able to explain it all, I've no doubt. Either your man just made a mistake in

identifying the body, or Pasquett and Radlett deliberately misled you, as part of their scheme for escape."

The Russian shook his head. "No," he said, "or why did Mr. Radlett, when I met him a month or two later in India, get me to write him out a copy of Pasquett's death certificate? He said he wanted it to show to his relatives."

Arthur looked his amazement. "You met Mr. Radlett in India, and he asked you for Pasquett's death certificate? Incredible. . . . How did you come to be in India?"

"I was on a confidential mission. We met wholly by accident. Of course, I did not want to be recognised as a Russian agent. Radlett promised not to give me away if I would get him a signed copy of the death certificate and have his papers from Turkestan sent for and handed over to him. He had been compelled to leave them behind in his flight."

"You sent them?"

"Yes. I did not recognise Mr. Radlett. I had only seen him among a number of prisoners. But he knew me at once."

"It can't have been Radlett. He was with Pasquett afterwards. The whole thing makes nonsense."

"I'm only telling you what happened. Perhaps the gentleman who calls himself Pasquett will be able to offer some explanation."

"I give it up," said Arthur. "I'll ask Pasquett what it all means when he comes back."

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Pasquett returned a few days after this talk, and he and Arthur sat talking far into the night, after Alison had gone to bed. "By the way," said Arthur, "I heard

a very curious story here the other day. It appears that you are dead."

Pasquett jumped. "Dead? My dear chap, what on earth do you mean?"

"Well, anyhow, I had a chap here who says he signed your death certificate down in Turkestan."

"My death certificate?"

"Yes, yours," said Arthur, laughing. "He told me all about how you and Radlett escaped from prison. It was just the same about your escape as Radlett had written in that story of his, and as you have told me. He said you had stayed behind and helped Radlett to escape, too, but then he went on to say the prison people had a note from Radlett saying you had died up in the hills, and asking them to bury your body. He said they did bury you, and he signed your death certificate."

Pasquett said nothing until Arthur paused. Then he put in a word. "What an extraordinary tale," he said. "Is the man likely to come back?"

"No," said Arthur, "he has left this part of the country, I believe."

"What a pity," said Pasquett lightly. "I'm sorry to miss meeting so fluent a liar. All Russians are liars, you know. It's the national vice."

"You did stay behind and help Radlett escape, didn't you?"

"Yes. My arrangement with him was that, if either of us got away, he was to make straight for India and get back to Europe, leaving a letter at the Governor's in Bombay to say where he had gone. But, when it came to the point, I found I couldn't go away and leave him. So I went back and managed to help him to get away."

"But the rest of the story's just nonsense, is it?"

"Entirely. Of course, we both escaped afterwards, and came to Europe together."

"I'm sure the man who told me thought he was telling the truth."

"Perhaps he did, but he wasn't, or I shouldn't be here. That's plain."

"He said he had an actual note from Radlett saying you were dead, and that Radlett, when he met him in India later, specially asked him for a copy of the certificate of your death from the prison returns."

"My dear fellow, the whole thing makes nonsense, unless——"

"Unless what?"

"Well, unless Radlett played some trick on them and never told me about it. But I can't see what on earth he could have gained by pretending I was dead. No, the story's absurd, my dear chap."

"But some one did die. There was a body."

"Very likely some one did. But it wasn't I, and it wasn't poor Hugh."

"It's an odd story for any one to have made up, Jack, isn't it?"

"I agree; but these Russians are queer birds. Why, in Moscow the other day——" And Pasquett tactfully changed the subject.

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Arthur's Russian acquaintance had not expected to pay another visit to the camp. He had told Arthur he was leaving that part of the country. But a few days later, when Arthur had nearly forgotten his strange story, he met him again in the hotel at Yeniseisk whither he had gone to make some arrangements about

the supply of stores for the concession. It was not Arthur who returned to the subject of their late conversation, as they sat talking together in the evening.

"You remember that story I told you about John Pasquett," said the Russian. "As it happens, I was going through some old papers the other day, and I found that letter of Radlett's I mentioned to you, telling us about Pasquett's death, and where to find the body. I had kept it because I had made some notes of my own on the back of it. Here it is, if you'd like to have a look at it." He withdrew a dirty piece of paper from his pocket-book.

Arthur read the note, which was in Russian, and dated nearly two years before. It was signed "Hugh Radlett," and appeared to be in Radlett's own writing, of which Arthur had seen a number of examples. He read the note, and asked if he might keep it. The Russian readily agreed.

"And by the way," he said, "I met Dr. Borsin the other day, and he confirms absolutely my recollections. It was he who made out the certificate of death. He says he had often seen Pasquett in the prison, and that he identified the body. Have you seen Pasquett since I spoke to you?"

"Yes."

"What does he say about it?"

"He says he thought it was all a cock-and-bull story."

The Russian shrugged his shoulders, and said no more for a full minute. Then he smiled.

"I should like to see this John Pasquett of yours," he said.

"He'll be here to-morrow," said Arthur. "You shall see him."

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Pasquett arrived at Yeniseisk on the following day. The Russian was out when he came, but was to call in the evening. "You remember," said Arthur, "that story I told you about the man who said you were dead. I've seen him again, and he gave me this." Arthur threw the letter across the table.

Pasquett looked sharply at him, and went red as he looked at the letter.

"That's Radlett's writing, isn't it?" said Arthur. "Look here, Jack, there must be some explanation of this. Did you tell me the truth the other day? Or is there something you want to hide? I want to know what there is behind this story. Come, now, are you John Pasquett, or aren't you? You're my friend, and I think I have a right to ask you."

For once in his life Pasquett seemed at a loss. There was a silence before he replied. "Arthur," he said, "I swear to you I am John Pasquett. Do you believe me?"

"Yes, Jack, I believe you; but all the same I want to know why Hugh Radlett wrote that letter, and whose body they took for yours, and why you didn't tell me the truth. For I believe, Jack, you do know the story that's behind this. Can you look me in the face and say you don't?"

Pasquett was again slow in answering. "I did tell you the truth," he said. "I don't know anything at all about it." But this time Arthur did not believe him.

"Look here, Jack, isn't that Radlett's writing?"

"If it is, he never said a word about it to me. It's as much a mystery to me as it is to you."

"Jack, that Russian fellow, who knew you down in Turkestan, is coming back here to meet you this evening. I asked him to."

At this news Pasquett was plainly flustered. "Didn't I tell you," he said, "I must start back this afternoon? They're at a critical stage now with the sinkings, and I must get back to take charge. I wouldn't have come to-day unless I'd promised you."

"I'm sorry, Jack, but you must really stay and meet this man—or else tell me all about it. Why don't you want to meet him? You're only making an excuse to get away."

"Look here, Arthur. We're good friends, but I don't know by what right you are putting me through this catechism. Suppose I don't want to meet this man, why should I meet him? Mayn't I have reasons of my own? What is it to do with you?"

It was Arthur now who paused before answering. He had to think. "I don't like saying it, Jack, but because—because I'm not sure of you any longer. It's your manner—the way you've taken this. I'm not even sure now you are John Pasquett."

"Well, my lad, I didn't expect this from you, and I'm not used to being mistrusted like this. I shan't stay to meet your friend. If you are my friend, I have a right to ask you to trust me. I am John Pasquett, Arthur, I swear it to you. Now, does that satisfy you?"

"Stay and meet him, Jack," said Arthur. "No, don't, only promise to tell me why you won't."

"Perhaps . . . not now," said Pasquett. "I must be going."

As he turned to go, a third man entered the room. Mutual recognition was immediate. The newcomer spoke first, in Russian. "Good-evening, Mr. Radlett," said he.

CHAPTER XXIII

SHOWS HOW ONE MAY SOMETIMES WISH OLD FRIENDS ELSEWHERE

At this strange recognition, Arthur Wharton fell back a pace, and stared in amazement at the two men. "A very natural mistake, M. Smerloff," he heard Pasquett answer, "but my name is not Radlett, but John Pasquett." But the words were stammeringly spoken; Pasquett had been thrown manifestly off his balance by the encounter.

"It is, of course, entirely your affair by what name you are called," said the Russian. Then he turned to Arthur. "In the circumstances, it would perhaps be best if I left you."

"No," cried Arthur. "There must be some explanation of this extraordinary affair, and I mean to hear it. Do you agree, Jack? May I ask M. Smerloff some questions?"

Pasquett—if that was his name (let us go on calling him by it till we make sure)—nodded. "Ask him," he said, "and then I will tell you all about it."

Arthur turned to the Russian. "Why did you address my friend as Radlett?" he asked.

"Because to the best of my belief that is his name."

"Why do you think that?"

"He is the man I met in India, as I told you. He said then he was Hugh Radlett, and he got Hugh Radlett's papers from me. I recognised him as a man

whom I had seen in the prison in Turkestan. If he is not Hugh Radlett, who is he?"

"You are sure he is not John Pasquett?"

"I have told you. John Pasquett is dead."

"But this man and Hugh Radlett have been together since in Reval. Radlett was murdered in London some months ago."

"Then I don't know who he is. I only know that he told me he was Hugh Radlett." The Russian turned to Pasquett. "Didn't you?" he asked.

"I did," was the answer, "but I'm John Pasquett for all that."

Arthur made an appeal. "Jack, if you have an explanation, for God's sake tell me. Why on earth did you pretend to be Radlett?"

"Isn't it obvious, Arthur? Hugh and I escaped from prison. We were compelled to leave all our papers behind, including those valuable plans of the concession. Then I met this fellow by accident in the streets of Bombay. I could have given him away to the Indian Government as a Bolshie agent. But I wanted those papers, so I came to terms with him. I promised that if he would leave the country at once after getting me the papers, I wouldn't tell on him. He agreed. But he wouldn't have let me have Radlett's papers unless he had believed that I was Radlett. So I pretended to be Radlett. Hugh fully approved when I told it to him afterwards."

"Where was Radlett when this happened?"

"Away from Bombay up at Simla seeing some Government chap."

Arthur thought a minute. "Yes," he said then, "but why did you want a copy of your own death certificate?"

This question again found Pasquett without a ready answer. Then he laughed. "Oh," he said, "I thought I might as well play out my little joke to the end."

"Your little joke?"

"Yes, pretending to be dead. Of course, it wasn't either Radlett's body or mine Dr. Borsin found."

"Whose was it, then?"

"Another poor devil's, who escaped with us. I pretended it was mine, and Hugh Radlett wrote that note you've got in order to make M. Smerloff think so."

"But," said Smerloff, "no one else escaped with you."

"Oh, yes, they did," said Pasquett, "even if you were never told. It was a Russian fellow, called something like Skitaletz, or Skerovic. I forget the exact name."

Smerloff shrugged his shoulders. "You have a ready imagination," he said, "but it is no business of mine."

"It is of mine, though," said Arthur. "Jack, do you swear all this is true? I ask you again. Are you John Pasquett?"

"Arthur, I swear to you that I am John Pasquett, and, if you don't believe me, I can easily prove it to you—when we get back to civilisation. There are plenty of people in America who knew me years ago."

"But aren't there some people who knew you here in Siberia, before you went to prison? Or who knew you in prison, as Pasquett?"

"I dare say; but no one I could find. Come, Arthur, take my word for it. Haven't I explained the whole mistake? Be friends, do."

"Jack, I'm your friend, whoever you are, and I think I do believe you. M. Smerloff, I am sorry to have dragged you in this way into our affairs."

The Russian bowed. "I wish you good-night, gentlemen," he said. "You are at liberty to call yourselves what you like so far as I am concerned. But pardon me if I find your habits a little confusing. However, it is not my way to meddle with other people's business. I shall say nothing about our little encounter." Bowing gravely, he left them together.

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"Let's have a breath of fresh air, Jack," said Arthur. Pasquett said nothing, and the two men strolled out to the door of the hotel together. As they stood beneath the lamp in the entrance a man passed them. He caught sight of Pasquett's face, and stopped. A smile of pleased recognition came into his face. "Hallo, Jack," he said, "where on earth have you been in all these years?" A great surge of relief swept through Arthur's mind as he heard this greeting. An old friend had turned up to identify Pasquett in the nick of time.

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Pasquett looked at the stranger and laughed—a short, cynical laugh. "Hallo, Billy," he said. "The same to you. I'm mining again—up the river. What are you doing?"

"Same old game," said the newcomer. "Got a dinky little mine out towards Krasnoyarsk. I'm manager now, old chap, under these Soviet blighters. Same slavedriver, I don't think, in this blinking land of the free. Come in and have a drink."

"Let me introduce my friend, Mr. Arthur Wharton," said Pasquett. "Arthur, this is Mr. Billy Southern, who used to be my under-manager in my old mine. You'll join us, won't you?"

Arthur shook Billy Southern warmly by the hand, and expressed his pleasure at the meeting. He was, indeed, inexpressibly relieved. The three men went back togther into the hotel.

Inside he sat still and listened, taking little part in the conversation, while the two old friends exchanged their reminiscences. Billy Southern, it appeared, had left the mines at the beginning of the war, and taken service as an engineer in the Russian army. He had been through the war and the revolutions, and had come back to the mines as the servant of the Soviet Government. He had no politics: he treated the whole change in Russia as a matter of no concern, save as it had affected him as soldier and industrial manager. He found labour easier to manage under Soviet conditions than under capitalist enterprise before the war. The Bolshies, he said, were "funny guys," but they did seem to mean business.

Pasquett and Southern talked long. They were both good talkers, and they had a lot to say to each other. Arthur was an interested listener. Every now and then one or other of them brought him into the conversation by asking his opinion, but he knew little of the things of which they were speaking. He listened eagerly, feeling that he got to know and like Jack Pasquett better with every fresh light on his character that was revealed. Billy Southern had evidently a vast admiration for his old chief. It was late when at length he rose to go. "Well, so long, Jack Pearson," he said, "it's like old times to have had this crack with you again." He turned to Arthur to say good-bye, and noticed that he was not himself. "Why, what's the matter?" he said.

Arthur, who had been completely reassured by the

conversation, had suddenly been plunged into consternation by hearing Southern address his friend, not as Jack Pasquett, or even as Hugh Radlett, but by a totally new and unexpected name.

"Mr. Southern," he said, "I must ask you a question. Why do you call my friend 'Jack Pearson'?"

Southern stared at him in surprise. "Why," he said, "Jack Pearson's his name. Ain't it, Jack? What in hell is he driving at?"

Pasquett answered swiftly. "It's like this, Billy. You see, my real name is John Pasquett, though you always knew me as 'Jack Pearson.' Arthur here knows me only by my real name. So he's naturally a bit perplexed."

"I get you. But I don't see why he need make all that fuss about it. Any chap might want to change his name, and why not? That's what I say."

"Well, anyway, Arthur, that's the truth," said Pasquett. "So long, Billy. *Au revoir.*" The two men shook hands, and then John Pasquett turned back to face Arthur again.

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"Now, Jack," said Arthur, "I've made up my mind. No, don't interrupt. I hope we're as good friends as ever, but I don't believe you're John Pasquett, and I don't believe you've got any right to Radlett's money or to the concession. I'm sorry, old chap, but it's best to be plain. I'm glad your name is Jack, whatever else it is."

"My dear Arthur, you're really quite wrong. I am John Pasquett, though I was working under a false name in Siberia before the war. You wonder why. Well, I left America in a hurry—under a charge—a

false charge. It's all cleared up now, but for the time I thought it best to change my name. I wanted to bury the past. Hugh Radlett used a false name, too. Come, now, you don't think any the worse of him for it. Lots of people use names that aren't their own."

"You've got too many *aliases,* Jack. I can't really swallow it all. Sorry, but there it is. And I shall have to tell my uncle what I think. You do see, don't you, I can't go on working the concession as if nothing had happened. If you aren't John Pasquett, our right—the Anglo-Asiatic's I mean—to the concession lapses. I'm responsible here for the Anglo-Asiatic's interests. You see, I must tell him."

"Oh, hell!" said Pasquett. Then, seeing Arthur's melancholy expression, he added, "It's all right, really." He laid his hand on Arthur's. "I've sworn to you, Arthur, that I am Pasquett, and it's quite true. But I won't get angry with you for doubting me. I'm not surprised. Any one might. There's only one thing for it. You must hold your hand till the work is far enough advanced for us to leave old Alison in charge here, and go to fetch Norah. Wait till then, Arthur.

"I can *prove* to you—*prove,* mind—when I get there, that I am Pasquett. Will you promise to do nothing till then? It really is quite all right. Honour bright!"

"Sorry, Jack, I can't. That'll mean the Anglo-Asiatic will go on spending money on the concession. No, I must cable to my uncle telling him. I mean I must tell him there is doubt about the soundness of the concession, and get him to stop expenditure as far as he can till the thing is cleared up. I won't tell him I doubt your identity, till you have a chance to prove it."

Pasquett thought. Then he said, "It will be worst

of all if you imperil the concession like that. Such a message from you, if it came out, would send the shares down with a run, and ruin everything. If you must tell, you had much better tell him the whole thing —in confidence. Tell him you doubt whether I am John Pasquett, and on what grounds. Then leave him to judge what he had better do."

"You want me to do that?" exclaimed Arthur, thoroughly surprised.

"Yes, just that or nothing. And I shall also write to Lord Ealing at once, if you write, and put my side of the case. Really, Arthur, you are being absurd. If we were in Paris or London I could prove my identity to you in five minutes. But I can't possibly leave here till the early autumn."

"It won't do, Jack. I must go home at once, and report to Lord Ealing. And you must come with me."

"No; I won't leave the work here. My dear fellow, I know it's perfectly O.K., and you'll find that out as soon as we get back to England and you see my proofs."

"Alison could manage here well enough. Come with me, Jack."

"No, I'm not going to be taken from my work over a *canard* like this."

On that day, Arthur's entreaties failed to move Pasquett, as Pasquett's failed to move him. He agreed indeed to sleep on the whole question, and to put off writing to Lord Ealing till the following day. But sleeping on it only confirmed his determination. He told Pasquett definitely that he had decided to write to his uncle telling his doubts, and to start for London at once, whether or not Pasquett chose to accompany him. He could not bear, he said, to go on living with Pasquett with the whole question unsettled, and he

could not take the responsibility of letting expenditure on the concession go on without an attempt to clear matters up at once. Lord Ealing would have to take the responsibility of either carrying on or stopping the work until his arrival. He asked Pasquett, if he could prove his identity, to place in his hands the means of verifying his proofs—introductions to old friends who had known him in earlier days, access to any relevant papers, and anything else that would be of use. He must go; didn't Jack see that he had no alternative?

Pasquett heard him out without interruption. When Arthur had done, he said, "No, I don't see at all. I think you might trust me enough to wait. But, if you have made up your mind, I know you won't change it. So I suppose I shall have to come back with you, though it will play the deuce with the work here."

"I can't tell you, Jack," said Arthur, "how glad I am you're coming with me. It makes me much more inclined to believe this is all a ghastly mistake."

"Not enough to put it off, I suppose? Look here, Arthur, if you insist on going, I'll come too. But for the last time I ask you to put it off."

Arthur Wharton, however, stuck to his point. Some of his friends were in the habit of saying he was a pig-headed fellow, when he once made up his mind. After a few days of preparation, the two men set off overland together for Europe. There was a constraint between them now, but their friendship remained as strong as ever. Several times on the long journey it seemed to Arthur that Pasquett was on the point of making some revelation. He kept on, as it were, trying Arthur to see how he would be likely to take something, if he made up his mind to tell. But, when it came to the point, Pasquett always sheered off, and the fact that

Arthur was conscious of these half-approaches to a revelation inevitably deepened his suspicions that something was seriously wrong. He made all sorts of wild surmises. Was his friend, whom he loved well in spite of his suspicions, really a swindler who had cleverly got possession of Hugh Radlett's fortune? It looked like that, and, if he was, might there not be even worse things behind? His uneasy mind suggested to him all manner of dark suspicions. He put them from him, but they thronged back to haunt him. And yet, the worse his thoughts of Pasquett, somehow the greater his affection grew. Arthur was thoroughly unhappy during that journey, whereas John Pasquett seemed in the best of spirits, and made many an ineffectual effort to cheer his friend. Was it that he was conscious of innocence, or that he was going to see Norah again, or merely that he was confident of pulling off a gigantic bluff? Arthur could not tell. He groaned in spirit, perplexed between fear and love.

CHAPTER XXIV

"IT MUST BE FEARFULLY DIFFICULT TO BE A GOOD DETECTIVE"

Superintendent Wilson chose to take his holidays in August—he was in a position to choose, while lesser men like Blaikie had to adjust their holidays to their superior's convenience. For a reason which he never made clear, even to himself, Wilson's fancy lighted on a holiday in France, and on Dinard as his place of sojourn—not the greater Dinard, but its neighbour, St. Enogat, where, for a moderate sum, he hired from the big hotel a pleasant little villa with a tiny garden and steps of its own leading down to the shore. He would have said, if you had asked him, that he was going simply for a holiday, and why not? But it was certainly in his mind that Dinard was not far from Paramé, on the other side of the broad estuary of the Rance. What could be more natural than that Wilson, staying at Dinard, should go to have another look at Paramé, where Mr. Culpepper and his family rented that other pleasant little villa he had visited a few months before?

For Wilson had not succeeded in putting the Radlett case thoroughly out of his mind. It continued to haunt him. It was not merely that the criminal had escaped out of his grasp; he was enough of a philosopher to bear such occasional defeats without any loss of tranquillity. It was that he was not satisfied that he

had got to the bottom of the mystery. Everything had pointed to Rosenbaum, but was Rosenbaum really the guilty man? He kept saying to himself that there was something "fishy" about the whole case. He turned to other cases, and solved them; but the Radlett murder stayed in his mind, a latent source of uneasiness and self-criticism.

Mrs. Wilson, though she said nothing to her husband on the point, was perfectly aware of the reasons for his sudden enthusiasm for a holiday in France—at Dinard, or somewhere along that bit of coast. She did not even remind him that he had cursed Dinard heartily the year before, when she had tentatively suggested a visit. She accepted placidly what her fate dispensed, well knowing that, if her husband had set his heart on going there, she had better let him have his way, unless she wanted him to fret and fume all through a holiday taken elsewhere. That sensible woman knew also that the great detective, her husband, needed looking after, like the rest of her children, in all matters involving arrangements of a personal character. He would plan the business of Scotland Yard with perfect efficiency down to the last detail, but he was quite incapable of making in good time even the simplest arrangements for the family holidays.

It was Mrs. Wilson, therefore, who hired the little villa at St. Enogat, took the tickets, and did the packing for her family when the time came. As soon as the journey was actually begun, Wilson came to himself. He managed things on the boat, at the customs house, at the hotel in whose grounds the villa lay, with as much skill and energy as if they had been vital steps in a murder case. It was not that he was inefficient, even in his family affairs, only his head was too full

of other things to bother about them till the last moment.

St. Enogat has admirable bathing—you run down straight from the little villas to the sea, and dry yourself unashamedly in the sun—a fine beach, a rocky headland where one can scramble, with just the necessary risk of being caught by the tide—in short, the attractions needed to make it an ideal place for children with not too nervous parents. Mrs. Wilson could sit on the beach and knit, receiving visits from her children between their expeditions. She could say to her husband that she knew he wanted to see the surrounding country, but she was far too comfortable on the *plage* to go with him. She could dismiss him with a smile, well aware that the only bit of country likely to interest him for the time was Paramé, on the opposite side of the river, but quickly to be reached by the little ferry-boat that plied regularly across the mouth of the Rance to St. Malo.

Wilson took the eldest boy with him, leaving the girl and the two younger boys behind, with a promise of splendid expeditions to come. Noon found him in Paramé, walking along the seashore, as he had walked in the winter, past the endless plantation of the breakwaters. But it was no part of his plan to visit the Culpepper *ménage*—at least, at present. He had come to spy out the land. Probably there was nothing to find out, but he had an instinct that the place would repay study.

Wilson's boy, immensely proud of his father and his father's profession, of which he told already great tales at school, vowing to be the master-detective when he grew up, sleuthed along at the Superintendent's side.

He could have wished his father to approach the house with more circumspection, for Wilson's hint that "There's a house along here I wanted to have a bit of a look at," had been quite enough to give that sharp young gentleman an idea that the expedition was one of business as well as pleasure. Wilson, however, went along quite openly till he was within a hundred yards of the villa, and could command a clear view both of its front door, and of the gate leading down to the sea. Then he pulled his son gently into the shadow of a boat drawn high up on the beach, and sat down with him to do nothing but watch for the time being.

"Father, what are you looking for?" asked the boy.

"I don't know, Robin. I'm just spying out the land a bit."

The house was evidently occupied. There was smoke coming out of a chimney, the veranda windows were open to the sea, the whole place looked bright and fresh under the noonday sun. They had lain there a quarter of an hour, and young Wilson was getting restless, when a middle-aged lady came out of the villa and passed within a short distance of them, going in the direction of the town. It was Mrs. Culpepper. They saw her turn back and speak to some one inside the house before she came out of the garden gate.

There was another pause of inaction. Then Wilson heard quite near at hand the chuff-chuffing of a motor-boat, and, looking seaward, saw the boat itself running along, close inshore.

"Is it going to land here, father?" asked the boy.

The boat ran on till it reached the little river opening just beyond the house. Up this it disappeared. They heard the engines for a minute or two longer,

then they stopped. A couple of minutes later a young woman appeared round the far side of the house, which she entered quickly through the open French windows.

"Who's that, father?" asked the boy.

"Norah Culpepper, that's her name, my boy. Any the wiser?"

"Why, father, wasn't it Mr. Culpepper you found in the cupboard?" He had often told the tale at school.

"You know too much, young man," said his father. "Now, shut up, and we'll go a bit nearer. I want to have a look at that boat."

Wilson did not go straight towards the house. Instead, he turned inland, and made his way round to the back of the little stream a short way above its mouth. There was a coppice reaching to its bank. Through this father and son made their way, until they saw the boathouse a yard or two ahead of them, on the very edge of the coppice. Wilson found a crack and applied his eye to it, so as to get a view of the interior. "Father, lift me up. I want to see, too," said his son, and was duly lifted.

There was nothing remarkable about the interior of the boathouse, except that it was very well kept and excellently fitted. In the centre lay a trim little motor launch, painted in bright colours, and with her metal-work bright and shining—evidently well cared for and in perfect condition. Wilson admired her lines: the boat looked as if she possessed both exceptional speed and strength. "So the girl runs that all alone, does she?" he said to himself. "Only wish I had one like her"—the boat, he meant, not the lady.

"Father," began the boy.

"Hush," said Wilson, softly, for the door on the other side of the boathouse was opening. Norah Cul-

pepper came in, quite unconscious that there were eyes upon her. "Not a sound," whispered Wilson, bending down to his son's ear. He speedily resumed his place at the crack, and the boy, having at length found another suited to his height, glued his eyes to that, and watched.

Norah Culpepper was stowing something away in the boat—something wrapped up in little parcels, which she was placing in what looked like a narrow secret drawer under the thwart. And she had brought provisions with her, enough, it seemed, to last for quite a voyage. What could she be up to? Wilson was thoroughly puzzled as he watched her. There was something quick and furtive about her movements, though she thought herself quite alone.

Suddenly the boy beside him stumbled, dislodging a stone and bumping gently against the wall of the boathouse. Wilson turned sharply round and caught him, holding him tight lest he should make a further sound. This compelled him for an instant to remove his eye from the crack. When he looked again, he saw Norah Culpepper, manifestly alarmed, standing bolt upright in the boat, listening intently. Wilson held his breath, and tightened his grip on his son. After a minute, the girl, hearing no further sound, apparently made up her mind that there was nothing to fear. Her pose lost its appearance of anxiety, and she resumed her work, stowing food away in the boat. In a few minutes, having done her task, she left the boathouse. They heard her steps receding towards the house along the gravel path.

Wilson waited a few minutes, considering the situation. The girl had locked the door of the boathouse on her departure, and it might be hard to open it with

his skeleton keys. Nor could he see an easy prospect of entering it from the water-side, as the walls protruded well out into the stream. Moreover, if he did enter the boathouse, there would be small chance of getting away unobserved if any one should come while he was there. He decided, regretfully, to postpone his examination of the place, though he very much wanted to see what Norah Culpepper had been concealing.

Motioning to the boy, whom he had by now released, he began to make his way back through the coppice, striking upstream away from the house. He meant to find a comfortable place where he and the boy could eat the sandwiches they had brought before resuming their explorations.

But, when he came to the edge of the wood, the first thing he saw was Norah Culpepper, standing on a little hillock, from which she could get a view of any one emerging from the copse on either of its two open sides. The house garden bordered it on the third side, the stream on the fourth.

Wilson saw the girl before they were actually out of the copse, and before she had a chance of seeing them. He had to decide at once whether to show himself, or to remain a prisoner in the copse until she chose to go away. He pulled the boy back deeper among the trees, while he considered the position. Miss Culpepper had evidently been alarmed by the sound she had heard, and had hurried round to the edge of the copse in order to make sure if any one had been spying on her. Perhaps she had even seen his eye at the crack, and her resumed self-possession had been deliberately assumed. What had he better do?

He was not long in making up his mind. The girl could not watch the copse and the boathouse at the

same time. If she would only stay where she was, he had the best of all opportunities of studying it from the inside with little risk of interruption; for the other inmates of the house were not very likely to go there. Hastily he told the boy what to do—to show himself plainly outside the copse, and to keep the young woman in sight. If she questioned him, he could say he had been playing in the copse, or even that he had been looking at the boathouse. If he lost sight of her, or she made for the boathouse, he was to cut in quickly and give his father warning.

The boy entered eagerly into the plot, while Wilson hurried back to the boathouse. He had seen just a chance of climbing in by the water-side, at some risk of a ducking. That was preferable to tampering with the lock, which might be noticed later, even if he were able to open it. Moreover, it would be difficult to get round to the door of the boathouse unobserved from the windows of the villa.

Wilson had to act quickly. With great care, he crawled along the face of the boathouse wall, getting precarious foothold on a slightly protruding joist which ran along the bottom of the woodwork. Suspended over the water, he managed to creep through the opening at the end, only tearing his coat a little on an inconvenient nail. As he stood up at last inside the little building, he heaved a sigh of relief.

There was no time to be lost. In a minute he was in the boat, hunting for the hidden drawer under the thwart in which Norah Culpepper had stowed away her mysterious packages. It took him some minutes to find the trick of it, but at length he pressed in the right two places, and revealed a long, narrow cavity, stuffed full of the little packets he had seen the girl

hide. They were carefully sealed: he could not open one without betraying that he had been meddling with it.

Wilson held the packet in his hand for a minute. Then hardly knowing why, he put it to his ear. Unconsciously, he had heard. Now he heard quite plainly the steady tick of a watch—of more than one watch. He put the packet back hastily into its place and tried another and another, with no result. No other packet gave back any sound. But he had formed his conclusion. Watches, he remembered, were subject to an *ad valorem* duty of 33 1/3 per cent. In looking for the clue to a murder mystery, he had stumbled on something very different. Miss Culpepper was a smuggler, engaged in introducing watches and perhaps other articles into England without payment of duty. What luck that one of the watches had been going!

But how did it all fit in? Did it fit in at all? Wilson had barely asked himself these questions when there came a rap on the side of the boathouse, and a voice whispering, "Father, are you there?"

He answered, and the boy whispered again that the lady had gone back to the house. Wilson hastily removed the traces of his visit, and clambered out again round the end of the boathouse, and so rejoined his son. "Come away quickly," he said. "I've seen what I wanted. I'll tell you presently," he added, as the boy began to ask questions. "We must get away first of all."

Following the same course as before, they emerged from the coppice. There was no sign of Norah Culpepper this time; no one was in sight. Wilson struck inland a good distance, and then turned in the direction of the town. Soon, they sat down under some friendly

trees, and ate their lunch. Wilson asked the boy how he had fared.

"Oh, father, the lady spoke to me. She asked me what I was doing there. I said I was just playing. She asked was there no one with me, and I said there was no one, but some one was coming for me soon. Was that right?"

Wilson nodded.

"Then she asked me my name, and said she was English, too. I said my name was—oh, father, I thought you wouldn't want them to know my name, and I tried to think of another, and—I made such a mess of it."

"Why, what did you say it was?"

"I said my name was Robin. Then she asked what my other name was, and oh—I said Pasquett. You know, I remembered that gentleman you brought to see us at home."

Wilson whistled. "And what did she say then?"

"She stared at me stupid-like, and repeated the name after me. I could see I had said the wrong thing and frightened her. I don't know why it was wrong. Father, I'm sorry."

"Never mind, Robin. You see, she knows Mr. Pasquett. It must have startled her. What did she say then?"

"She looked at me a minute, as if she didn't know what to say. I didn't either. Then she started running towards the house, and I ran as hard as I could run through the trees till I got to you. I made sure she was going straight to the boathouse. She was frightened, father."

"I don't think there's much harm done, Robin. She won't find any trace of me in that boathouse, I hope,

and when she doesn't, she'll think your name really is Pasquett, and it was just a coincidence. Do you think she suspected you weren't telling her your real name? From the way you said it, I mean."

The boy thought for a moment, very solemnly.

"I don't know, father," he said.

"Well, we'll hope she didn't, and you got me out of that boathouse jolly well, Robin. Well done, my boy, though you did make that one slip."

They munched in silence for a few minutes. Then, "Father," said the boy, "it must be frightfully difficult to be a good detective."

"It's not too easy to be a good anything, Robin. But it's largely practice and patience."

Then as they resumed their walking, Wilson told the boy what he had found in Norah Culpepper's boat. Robin was highly delighted at the idea that he was taking part in the detection of a smuggler—it seemed to him much better fun than a murder case. He prattled on about it all the way home to St. Enogat. But Wilson, while he kept up the talk with his son, was thinking hard. How did it fit in? Clearly, these watches were meant for smuggling—probably for smuggling into England. Then did Norah Culpepper really cross the Channel in her motor-boat, and land her cargo on some spot on the English coast? It would be a dangerous game, especially if she managed the boat alone, but it was just possible. That must be it; for it was hardly likely that she passed the watches on to a waiting ship. Of course, she might have confederates—a crew. There was further watching to be done.

But had Miss Culpepper and her motor-boat any connection with the case in which he was mainly in-

terested—the crime committed at Sugden's Hotel? Catching smugglers was all very well in its way, but Wilson's main interest was in the major crime. And what he had found was a boat, well equipped for making secret journeys across the Channel, and probably in the habit of making such journeys under Norah Culpepper's expert guidance. Had that, or had it not, any connection with the murder of Hugh Radlett, or with the curious disappearance of his body? Wilson thought hard, but as yet he could find no answer to his question. He must find out more about Miss Culpepper and her boat.

CHAPTER XXV

PROVES HOW IMPORTANT IT IS FOR THE REVENUE SERVICE THAT PHILOSOPHERS SHOULD HAVE WIVES

Superintendent Wilson paid his next visit to Paramé on the following day, but this time he went alone, despite the lamentations of his eldest son. Robin felt that he had a right to share in the later stages of the adventure in which he had played a part. But his father pointed out to him that Miss Culpepper now knew him by sight, and would be on her guard against him.

"But she knows you, too, father," said the boy, full of discontent.

"She does, and quite possibly I may even call on her, and pay my respects. But she does not, and must not, connect me with you. If I call on her, it is simply a friendly call because I happen to be making holiday in these parts. If I take you with me, she will know at once that I have been spying on her."

So Robin was left behind, to work off his discontent by tyrannising over his brothers and sister, and detecting them red-handed in the commission of unutterable crimes.

This time, Wilson started early, and was at the Culpepper house by ten o'clock. The boat, he found, was not in the boathouse. Presumably, it had departed on its smuggling expedition and had not returned.

That looked as if it went all the way to England, and did not merely hand over its freight to some other vessel a few miles off land.

Having satisfied himself of the absence of the boat, Wilson took up his post, just inside the copse, at a point from which he could see the front door of the house. A middle-aged woman, whom he recognised as Mrs. Culpepper, was sitting in a comfortable chair outside the door, reading an English newspaper. He saw the old servant, Marie, come out and speak to her, and then go back into the house. He could even hear most of what they said. Mrs. Culpepper asked if Etienne had said when they would be back. Marie's reply was less easy to hear, but it sounded like an assertion that it would not be till to-morrow, if then. "They worry me always, these voyages," said Mrs. Culpepper, to which Marie replied only with a grunt.

This brief conversation settled one of Wilson's doubts. Norah Culpepper did not man her boat alone; there was also some one called Etienne. Who Etienne was he would have to find out later.

Wilson saw no point in calling on Mrs. Culpepper in her daughter's absence, or in watching the villa further on that day. So he directed his steps back through Paramé, and stopped at the first houses he reached, a row of pleasant, whitewashed cottages, which looked as if they were inhabited by fisher folk. Boats were drawn up below them on the beach, and a young man, in the dress of a fisherman, was sitting ruminatively on an upturned rowing boat. Wilson went towards him, and passed the time of day.

By discreet stages the Superintendent led the young man on to talk. By-and-by, he asked him if there

were any English living in the neighbourhood. This inquiry produced a jerk of the thumb towards the Culpeppers' villa, and the remark that there were some queer folk in that house—but then, all the English were queer. "How queer?" Wilson asked him, and got the reply that there was a young woman who was always about in her motor-boat. "Alone?" Wilson asked, as if surprised. "Sometimes alone, sometimes with Etienne—he is the husband of their servant." Wilson supposed that they went short trips sight-seeing along the coast. The young man closed one eye, and looked at him curiously. "But no; often they go far upon the open sea." He spread out his arms with an indicative gesture. "One voyages far, from that house. Monsieur perhaps has a purpose in these questions."

The young man's purpose was clear enough: he wanted money in return for his information. Wilson was annoyed that his own purpose had been perceived, but it seemed best to go on. "In effect, yes," he said, "I shall be glad to learn what you may know—and to pay, if you keep your tongue still."

"As for me, I do not love these Culpeppers," said the young man; "and, for Etienne—bah! There are queer things done in that house, monsieur, or why do they voyage so far at night? Last night, they started, and they are not yet returned. It is often so."

"Does Miss Culpepper always take Etienne with her?"

"On her long journeys, yes; but she often goes in the day-time in the boat alone."

"It is a long time ago. I suppose you do not remember whether she was making these journeys last November—just about the 17th?"

The young man started; but all he said was, "Monsieur, then, is particularly anxious to know."

Wilson gathered that the time had come to cross the fisherman's palm with money, and a note changed hands as he said, "Six weeks or so before Christmas, what is it that happened?"

"My faith, it is so. It was then she made her long voyage alone, leaving Etienne behind. Then, and then only. And she was away the night, and came back on the next day."

"You mean she went right out to sea alone? Do you know where?"

"No, I know not; but upon the broad sea. She got Etienne away by giving him a holiday, and she did not tell him she was going away. He went into St. Malo, and got drunk, the pig. He, too, did not come back till the next day."

"How do you know she went away?"

"Because I saw her, monsieur, with these eyes. I watched her quite out of sight. It was late when she went, but I could see her light—far." Again he spread out his arms.

"Did you tell Etienne, or any one else, you had seen her?"

"Where one knows a thing, monsieur, the wise man keeps his mouth tight, until there comes a generous gentleman. Generosity, monsieur, unlocks the lips."

"You mean you have more to tell."

"Perhaps, monsieur," said the young man dreamily. "Who knows?"

"I will give you a hundred francs for all you know more." Wilson saw the man hesitate, and added, "No more, no less. It is good pay."

The fisherman sighed. "We are in the hands of God," he said. "Well, monsieur, when she came back she was not alone."

"Who was with her?" said Wilson sharply.

"A gentleman. I do not know his name. But he has stayed with the Culpeppers more than once."

"What sort of a gentleman?"

"A tall, fair man of about forty. He is the friend of M. Culpepper—and of his daughter."

"This man?" asked Wilson, taking a small photograph of Pasquett from his pocket-book.

"The same, monsieur."

"But this gentleman was staying with the Culpeppers both before and after the day you mention. You are sure he had not merely been out for a short trip with Miss Culpepper in the boat."

"He had not, monsieur. Mlle. Culpepper drove him away in her car two days before, and returned without him."

"You seem to be a very observant person."

"I am a philosopher, monsieur. It pleases me to observe. It is dull here otherwise."

"What do you do for a living?" asked Wilson.

"But monsieur, I am a philosopher. My wife—loves work. I observe; she labours. It is only fair."

"What if I told you that Marie says the gentleman was staying there all the time?" asked Wilson.

"Bah, Marie, she is an idiot. She says what she is told. I say only what I have seen. There was no gentleman in the boat when Miss Culpepper left."

"But she may have returned the same night, and taken him out for a trip in the morning."

"No, monsieur, the boat was not in the boathouse in the morning. I rise early. I went to look."

"What day did all this happen?"

"What day? That is difficult. Let me see, then." The young man pondered. "It was one, two, three, four days before the Sunday when the priest died. And from then it was five Sundays to Christmas. That was when she went away."

Wilson made a quick calculation. "Hm, that tallies," he said. "And she came back the following day? When? In the morning?"

"Late in the afternoon. She and the gentleman seemed very tired. I watched them bring the boat in."

"And the gentleman. Did he stay long after that?"

"He was gone the next day, but I did not see him go. Mlle. Culpepper also was out all that day in her motor-car."

"Think hard, please. Is there anything else you can tell me?"

The young man remained silent for a minute. Then he said, "That is all, I think."

"Your name and address, will you give me them?"

"You will pay me more if you need me at the trial, monsieur. I am a poor man."

"What trial?"

"Monsieur is perhaps of the English revenue service?"

Wilson laughed. "Perhaps I am. Yes, you will be paid."

"My name is Georges Ferry. I live there." The young man pointed to one of the cottages. "They call me 'Lazy Georges' in these parts."

Wilson paid "Lazy Georges," and thanked him for his information. He had found out a great deal—far more than he could digest at the moment. He walked back into the country to think it over.

Certain things were plain. "Lazy Georges," at least, suspected Miss Culpepper's smuggling activities. But this was unimportant. What mattered was that Pasquett's *alibi* had been a fake. He had not been at Paramé on the night of the murder. He had left before it took place and he had not come back until the day after. And he had come back from somewhere across the sea. Almost certainly he had come from England.

In that case, there was every reason to suspect him of complicity in the murder, and very likely of having committed it himself. But, in that case, where did Rosenbaum come in, and why had he fled with the trunk? No, that was nonsense. Rosenbaum had actually been seen with Radlett's dead body in his arms.

Seen; but by whom? By Culpepper, the father of the girl who had brought Pasquett back from England. If Miss Culpepper was an accomplice, why not Culpepper, too? Culpepper might have invented the whole story about Rosenbaum and the body in order to shield Pasquett.

An idea flashed across Wilson's mind. Suppose Rosenbaum and Pasquett were the same person. But no. That made nonsense, too; for it was certain, beyond any chance of doubt, that Rosenbaum was a real person, and that he had been in London and Glasgow, and had escaped from Aberdeen. He could not possibly be Pasquett, unless he had the art of being in two places at the same time. Inquiries had proved beyond doubt that he was in England when Pasquett was at Warsaw.

Besides, Radlett and Rosenbaum had crossed together to England on the boat, and it was quite ridiculous to suppose that Pasquett, Radlett's closest friend,

could have disguised himself so as to deceive the millionaire. Nor was it less ridiculous to imagine that Radlett had concealed Pasquett's identity in collusion with him. What conceivable reason could he have had for doing so? Men do not connive at their own murder in such a way.

The more Wilson thought, the deeper the puzzle grew. He was convinced, in view of Georges Ferry's revelations, that Pasquett had been concerned in the murder, and inclined to believe that Culpepper must have been an accomplice. But he could not make the parts of the puzzle fit. No; he needed yet more evidence to set his mind effectively to work. And that evidence he must get without delay. His holiday was ruined, but what did that matter? He was in his element, buoyed up again by hope of solving the most puzzling mystery of his career.

Wilson lunched on bread and cheese and cider in a village inn, and then walked slowly back towards Paramé. He would make sure whether the boat had returned, and, if it had, would perhaps even pay a call on Norah Culpepper. Again he stole through the coppice, and looked into the boathouse. It was empty: the girl had not yet come back. He went round to the front of the house. Mrs. Culpepper was again sitting in the sunny garden, reading a book. Wilson approached the front door, and knocked. Marie answered, and he asked if Mrs. Culpepper was at home. The old servant, with a sharp look at him, as if she wondered on what business he had come, went away to look for her mistress. It was plain she recognised him, but she did not refer to their previous meeting. After a minute she returned, and conducted him round the corner of the house to where its mistress was sitting.

"I hope you will not think this an unpardonable intrusion," said Wilson. "I am holiday-making in these parts, and, seeing you in the garden, I came to pay my respects to you and your daughter. You will remember my visit in the winter."

Mrs. Culpepper had seemed flustered, but she was reassured when he said that he had not come on business.

"Unfortunately," she told him, "my husband and daughter are both away. Do sit down, please."

Wilson took a chair beside her. "Is Miss Culpepper in England?" he asked.

Mrs. Culpepper gave a start. "In England!" she said. "She . . . oh, dear no, she is only out on a pleasure trip . . . in her boat."

"I thought she might be with her father in London."

"Dear me, no. We are stay-at-home folks, Norah and I."

"Surely Miss Culpepper sees something of London, now that Mr. Culpepper is there so much. You should come yourself sometimes, Mrs. Culpepper."

"I much prefer staying quietly at home, Mr. Wilson."

"I saw your daughter not so long ago in England, I think. Let me see now. Was it when I was at Weymouth, or Southampton?" Wilson drew a bow at a venture.

Mrs. Culpepper fluttered a little, he thought, as she answered, "I think you must be mistaken, Mr. Wilson. I am sure Norah has not been at either of those places."

"I was not mistaken about seeing her, Mrs. Culpepper," said Wilson, laughing; "though, upon my word, I have forgotten where it was. It was some place on the south coast, I am sure. I'm trying to

remember where. Perhaps you know where she stayed, when she was in England. I shall remember in a minute."

"Norah has been to England once or twice . . . with her father. But I am afraid I don't know quite where they went. Perhaps it was in London you met her."

"No, it was not London. Somewhere on the south coast. Some small place, I think. I had motored out from Southampton. She was in a boat—a pretty motor-boat, Mrs. Culpepper. I remember perfectly. Your daughter is not the kind of person one forgets. But for the life of me I can't remember the name of the place. However, it doesn't matter."

Having failed, by his rather clumsy ruse, to get the name of the place where Norah Culpepper was in the habit of landing in England, Wilson quickly changed the subject, and talked of indifferent things in the hope of disarming Mrs. Culpepper's suspicions. He had talked her into quite a good humour before long. Then he returned to his purpose by a more roundabout way. He began talking of the merits and demerits of the various resorts, large and small, on the south coast of England, watching Mrs. Culpepper eagerly to see if any name made her start or betray uneasiness. She did not do either, but when he mentioned Bournemouth and Poole he noticed that she abruptly changed the subject, and at the first opportunity rose and gave him her hand, thanking him pleasantly for his call, and again regretting the absence of her husband and daughter. Wilson left her, by no means sure that he had got the clue he wanted, but feeling that it was at least worth while to make a few inquiries in the neighbourhood of Bournemouth and Poole. There was

an excellent harbour at Poole, and many motor-boats, enough to make one more or less inconspicuous. A quotation—or rather a misquotation—from one of his favourite authors came to his mind.

"Where does a man hide a pebble? On the beach. Where does a man hide a leaf? In the forest," he repeated softly to himself, as he walked back in the direction of St. Malo.

CHAPTER XXVI

OF AN OLD SALT, AND HIS DEALINGS WITH A YOUNG LADY

Wilson had sad news to break to his wife that evening. Holiday or no holiday, he was going back to England at once. He hoped that he would not be away more than a couple of days, but he could not be certain. He had a clue which he must follow up at once.

That admirable woman received his news with no more than a sigh. She had half expected some such development, and she had known all along that his choice of a place for his holiday was not all disinterested love for the coast or the people of France. "Get back as soon as you can, dear," she said; "the children will be dull without you."

Wilson kissed his wife, and promised to lose no time in coming back. Then he told her exactly what he had discovered, and what was the purpose of his journey to England. Finally, he asked her what she thought.

"I'm certain of one thing," she said, "and that is this. Mr. Pasquett didn't kill Hugh Radlett, or any one else. When you brought him home, dear, I had a good chance of telling what he was like. And I'm quite sure Mr. Pasquett never killed anybody."

"It's odd, but that's just how I feel myself. I can't fancy him a murderer——"

"Or the accomplice of a murderer," Mrs. Wilson put in.

"Or a murderer's accomplice," Wilson agreed. "And

yet—— Why did he lie about his *alibi?* Why did he deliberately fake an *alibi,* as he must have done?"

"Perhaps, dear, if he really was in England secretly at the time, he was afraid he would be suspected, and made up his *alibi* for that reason."

"He was a fool if he did," said Wilson. "And yet—was he? If he was doing a bit of smuggling with that Culpepper girl, it might be awkward for him to say where he was."

"I never said he wasn't a smuggler, dear. I only said he wasn't a murderer. There's a great difference."

"Quite. And that might account for the *alibi* fake, especially if he was in it with the Culpepper girl. But he didn't cross to England with Norah Culpepper. How did he get into England? That's what I want to know. There's no record of his entry at any of the steamship offices."

"If Miss Culpepper could cross the Channel unknown, so could he, I suppose."

"Yes, that's so. But why did he cross? What was he doing on that secret journey to England, if he wasn't mixed up with the murder? And how did the Culpepper girl come to bring him back in her boat?"

"Was he in the smuggling business with her?"

"Possibly; but, in that case, why didn't they cross from France together? No, I can't help feeling that Pasquett's journey had something to do with the murder. Old Culpepper had, you see. He was actually on the spot when the murder was committed. And Pasquett was his business associate, as well as mixed up with his daughter. No, it must all hang together, but I'm damned if I see how. You see, Culpepper's story seems to prove that Rosenbaum did it."

"In the light of what you've found out, dear, do you

think Mr. Culpepper is to be regarded as a very reliable witness."

"No, of course not. His story is very likely all a fake, too. But, if it is, what have we to go on? I can only follow this smuggling trail blindly, in the hope that it will lead me somewhere."

. . . . . .

Wilson caught the boat at St. Malo on the following day, and landed in the late afternoon at Southampton. Thence he took train for Bournemouth, where he put up at a hotel for the night. He rose early the next day, and began an energetic inquiry among the boatmen, with the object of seeing whether Norah Culpepper and her motor-boat were known at all in those parts. He drew blank, and set out to walk along the shore to Poole Harbour, which, he told himself, was the most likely place. As he walked, he kept a keen lookout for any place likely to furnish harbourage for a motor-boat that desired an inconspicuous refuge. There was nothing till he had passed Canford Cliffs, and come within a short distance of Poole itself. Then he struck inland, and made for the town along the eastern side of the harbour.

Poole Harbour is a big expanse, and Wilson realised that his quest was not easy. He wanted to find out whether a particular motor-boat, whose owner had probably been at pains to make it as inconspicuous as possible, had been seen anywhere in the harbour nearly nine months before. And he had only a suspicion that it had ever been there at all. Direct inquiries on this point were almost certain to be fruitless, but there was fortunately another way of approach. To the best of Wilson's belief, Norah Culpepper had been on one of

her voyages to England only two nights before. Obviously the right line of inquiry was to begin by trying to trace her most recent visit, and then work back, if he could, to the events of the previous November. But, first of all, he would make a call on the revenue authorities and the coastguards, and see if they could help him in any way.

The authorities at the port were quite unhelpful. They had no suspicion that any smuggling was going on, and seemed to regard smuggling as an obsolete occupation. Nor had they any knowledge of Norah Culpepper or her boat. Wilson left them, and went towards the coastguard look-out, where he found an old sailor in charge. He explained that what he wanted was to get on the trail of a motor-boat, which he described, manned by a girl and a Frenchman, which he believed to be in the habit of making occasional visits to the harbour. The boat came, he said, all the way from France.

The coastguardsman denied all knowledge of such a boat. No one, he said, would be such a fool as to make voyages from St. Malo to Poole in a small motor-boat. It could be done, he admitted, but it would be dangerous work, even apart from the risk of being caught smuggling. "No," he said, "there ain't no boat comes here from France. Not but what," he added reflectively, "the boat sounds mighty like the young lady from Lymington. She 'as a French chap as helps 'er manage."

Wilson's heart leapt up. A few further inquiries left no doubt in his mind that "the young lady from Lymington" was really Norah Culpepper, or that she had covered her journeys to Poole by pretending to come from just along the coast.

"When did you last see that young lady?" he asked.

"A month ago or more," was the disappointing reply. "But one of the others may have seen her since. I'll ask." He bawled to the two men standing on the look-out, "Has either of ye seen that girl from Lymington here lately? Her with the fast motor-boat?"

Wilson saw the two men exchange a few words. Then one came towards them. "I saw her two nights ago," he said. "Why, what's up?"

"Then she's the woman I'm looking for," said Wilson. "I've explained to your mate I'm an officer from Scotland Yard." The man whistled. "Now, I want you to tell me, if you can, whether any of you saw her here on the night of November 17th last, or on that or the following day."

The two men looked at each other. "Too long ago," said the old man, and the other nodded. "I shouldn't remember if I had." "Nor should I," said the other. "She comes here about once a month, I should say." The older man agreed.

"Well," said Wilson, "if you can find out about November 17th, there'll be something for you." Both men shook their heads. "But, even if you can't," Wilson went on, "perhaps you know where she puts the boat when she's here."

"Is it down at Peter's, Billy?" asked the younger man.

"Ay, Peter's," said the elder. "Maybe you don't know old Peter."

Wilson affirmed his ignorance.

"Peter's an old chap, used to be a fisherman, has a crazy old boathouse up by Hamworthy," said the younger man. "He's too old to go out himself, and he lets out boats off the beach."

"He might know 'bout November," said the other.

Wilson thanked the coastguardsmen, and set off in search of Peter, whom he had been told he would find in a little cabin on the beach, near his boats. He had no difficulty in locating it. "This is Peter's," was scrawled in red on a plank fixed on the top of the cabin. "Boats for hire," it said beneath, and there was a doggerel inscription scrawled on the wall.

"If in a pretty boat you'd sail,
Upon the ocean's breast,
Remember this and do not fail,
OLD PETER HAS THE BEST."

"AND CHEAPEST" was written below, apparently as an afterthought, a concession of the poet to the spirit of competitive industry. Wilson approached the cabin. Its proprietor came out as he drew near.

"Old Peter" did not look like a real sailor. He was more like a landsman decked out as an advertisement of Lifebuoy Soap. On his head was an enormous sou'wester, on his feet an enormous pair of sea-boots. The space between was filled in with oilskins of an appearance too nautical to be true, and by a great, shaggy, bearded face, in which were set a pair of little, cold, calculating eyes with the most unnautical appearance. In short, "Old Peter" was got up as the authentic representation of the "Old Salt."

Wilson greeted this apparition. "Business brisk?" he asked. "Old Peter" replied by moistening a finger and holding it up to catch the wind. "A fine day for a sail, your honour," he said. He spoke with a strong Irish brogue.

Wilson replied that he was looking for a young lady

of his acquaintance, who, he believed, kept her boat with him at Hamworthy. He described Norah Culpepper. Did "Old Peter" know if she was in the town?

"Sure, and it's but two days ago she was here," was the answer. Wilson pretended disappointment. "This is the second time I've missed her," he said. "The other time was in the winter, the middle of last November."

"Your honour means the time she came here alone, an' the gentleman met her and took her back with him."

"Yes. I was to have gone with them," Wilson improvised. "I'm an old friend of hers."

"A fine young lady," said Old Peter. "An' she can handle a motor-car as well as she can a boat."

"I didn't know she ever brought her car here."

"Why, sir, that very time you were speakin' of, she drove down the gentleman in a motor-car to my bit of a place out at Hamworthy. In a proper hurry, too, she was. She told me I was to get the car driven in to Poole and sent back to the garage, and she and the gentleman went off in the boat. She left me the money to pay the garage—and something for meself, sir. A most open-handed young lady, by your honour's leave."

"When was it you say that happened?"

"Faith, and what does it matter, and it so long ago?"

Wilson took a note from his pocket, and held it in his hand as he answered, "Oh, I wondered if you remembered. That's all."

Old Peter's eyes fastened on the note. "And why

wouldn't I remember?" he said. "Sure, it was the day one of me boats was stolen."

"What day was it?"

Old Peter consulted a dog's-eared memorandum book. "It was on the eighteenth day of November."

"What time of day?"

"In the afternoon, your honour. I was just after havin' me afternoon nap when they drove up."

"Do you know where they had come from?"

"I do not, but the gentleman at the garage said it was the day before she had had the car, and she'd been after drivin' it a matter of two hundred and fifty miles."

Wilson quickly thought out the distance from Poole to London. It coincided nearly enough with the distance mentioned for the double journey. He confirmed the information that Norah Culpepper came to Poole in her boat about once a month, always, save on this one occasion, accompanied by Etienne. They arrived usually in the morning, and left in the late afternoon. As Wilson took his leave, the old man said, fingering the note which Wilson had given him, "It's thirsty weather, sir, an' I wouldn't like to be breakin' into this for the matter of a drink." Wilson laughed, added a *pourboire* to the note, and made for the town.

At the garage where Norah Culpepper had hired her car he met with a disappointment. The place had changed hands only two months before, and the old proprietor had died. The man who had been his assistant had left the town, and his whereabouts were unknown. No confirmation could therefore be got of what Old Peter had told him. Wilson called at the police station, and set the local police to work to dis-

cover some one who had been at the garage at the time when the car was hired. But he did not propose to wait in Poole till this was done. He caught the next train for London. "Now for Mr. Culpepper," he said to himself.

CHAPTER XXVII

IN WHICH A DEVOUT COMMUNIST RECEIVES AN INTOLERABLE INSULT, BUT TRUTH IS FOUND IN THE MOUTHS OF BABES

Mr. Alfred Culpepper has become a very much greater man since we last met him. Then he was somewhat careless of his appearance. His clothes fitted none too well, and he wore them negligently. He looked like what he was, a business man in a small way, with no pretensions to be more than a respectable member of the middle class.

Now all that is changed. Mr. Culpepper arrays his small person in a faultlessly cut morning coat. His top hat is always fresh and glossy; his gloves always look new. For is he not a director of the great syndicate which is to make the fortunes of so many British investors? Is he not the colleague and personal representative of John Pasquett, the millionaire *entrepreneur,* now absent in Asiatic Russia? And does it not behove such a man to dress the part, and to be prepared to stand comparisons even with the great Lord Ealing—the best dressed man in the whole *Directory of Directors,* to say nothing of *Who's Who?*

Lord Ealing, to be sure, finds Culpepper's airs and graces more than a little ridiculous. He says that Culpepper looks like the last word in shopwalkers.

But he is careful not to say it in the little man's hearing. He is always charming when they meet. And Culpepper is never weary of speaking about his friend and colleague, the Earl of Ealing—a business man and one of Nature's gentlemen, as well as Debrett's.

Yet we may surmise that little Mr. Culpepper is not unaware that Lord Ealing is laughing at him, or that some people find his lapse into dandyism ridiculous. Perhaps he even wishes to be thought a little foolish—a valuable reputation in the City for a man who is, in fact, peculiarly wide awake.

Superintendent Wilson had only seen Mr. Culpepper once or twice since the Radlett affair dropped out of sight. But he had seen enough of him to form the opinion that the little man had brains. As their last meeting had been before Mr. Culpepper blossomed out as a swell, he was more than a little surprised at the glossy appearance of Pasquett's partner when, in the manner to be related, Culpepper walked into General Bunker's office at Scotland Yard. "Why," he asked himself at once, "is the fellow giving himself airs and playing the dandy? Not, I'm sure, because his head is turned or for the fun of the thing. No, he must have something up his sleeve." Wilson had no time, however, to analyse his sensations. There were other matters to occupy him—matters which brooked no delay.

For, on his arrival at Scotland Yard, direct from his adventures at Poole, Wilson had met with a surprise. He had been greeted with amazement by Inspector Blaikie on entering the office. "Why, I have just wired off a despatch to you in France," Blaikie had said. "Bunker's scored over us all. He's got Rosenbaum."

"Another of them? Good Lord," said Wilson, thinking of the indignant Ivor Rose whom Bunker had mistaken for a Bolshevik. "What the devil do you mean?"

"It's the right man this time," said Blaikie. "At least, I think so."

"Heaven help us. Has Bunker done something sensible at last?" said Wilson. "How did he get him?"

"He'll never forgive me if I don't let him tell you himself," said Blaikie. "Will you come along to his room?"

Wilson asked no further questions, but followed down the maze of corridors to Bunker's office.

"Come in," said a loud, cheery voice, and they entered the General's presence.

"Hallo, Wilson, that you? Thought you were abroad. Have you heard the news?"

"Blaikie has just told me that you have arrested Rosenbaum."

"Nabbed him, begad. Smart work, what?"

"How did it happen?"

"Well, the fellow had the audacity to come back to this country."

"How did you get on his track?"

"Um—we didn't exactly get on his track. You see, things were getting a bit dull, and I thought we'd brush 'em up a bit. Must keep people thinkin' about the Red Peril, don't you know. So I just raided all the Bolshie holes in London to see what I should find. Landed a big fish, too, 'pon my word."

Wilson was a little relieved to find that only accident had delivered Rosenbaum into General Bunker's hands. Fortunate accidents would happen, even in the worst-regulated departments.

"I see. Sheer luck," he said unkindly.

Bunker was too elated to be angry. "No such thing, my boy," he answered. "Sheer inspiration, I call it. What was it made me raid that place just then, if it wasn't inspiration?"

"What place? Where did you get him?"

"At the Nineteen Seventeen Club, my boy," said Bunker, triumphantly. "Always told you that place was a hotbed of Bolsheviks. They'd positively made the fellow a member."

"Was he calling himself Rosenbaum?"

"Of course he wasn't. But I saw through him. He called himself Ivan Slinski."

"How do you know he is Rosenbaum?"

"He says so himself. I made him confess it. Of course, when we arrested him I hadn't the ghost of an idea who he was. But, as he was a Russian, I knew he must be one of those scoundrels. So I had him in here and talked to him like a father, all about murder and his vile principles, and the gallows, and what'd be good for his soul. When I'd got fairly out of him about his being one of a murder gang, suddenly he says, 'In the name of God, I didn't do it. I am innocent. I swear I was never within a mile of Sugden's Hotel that night.'

"You could have knocked me down with a feather when he said that. Of course, I didn't know him from Adam till he owned up. But I twigged in an instant who he must be when he started talking like that ("I leant over and told him," whispered Blaikie to his chief; "I was there.") So I said to him, 'Ivan Rosenbaum, all is discovered. You had better confess everything.' Some stroke that, what." The General looked triumphantly at his hearers.

Wilson turned to Blaikie. "You were there, were you?" he said.

"Absolutely caught the fellow out," Bunker went on. "He admitted then he was Rosenbaum, but he persisted in saying he was innocent. Talked some rot about murder being against his principles as a Communist. When every one knows all Communists are murderers."

"I must see Rosenbaum," said Wilson.

"You shall, Wilson, you shall. He's almost due here now. I've sent for that fellow Culpepper to identify him. I understand he saw him at the hotel."

"He said he did," said Wilson. "Well, we shall see."

Inspector Blaikie struck in. "I arranged for the porter from Sugden's Hotel to come here in half an hour's time, and Mr. Culpepper a quarter of an hour later. I didn't tell them what for."

"Oh, you arranged it, did you?" said Wilson.

"Under my direction," said Bunker. "He's my prisoner."

"We won't quarrel over him," said Wilson. There was a knock at the door. "Is that he?"

Bunker shouted, "Come in," and the prisoner entered between two wardens. He was a tall, bushy-haired man, whose description tallied with that given of Rosenbaum by Mr. Culpepper and the servants at Sugden's Hotel.

"Would you like to question him?" asked Bunker of Wilson.

"If I may," said Wilson. "I understand your name is Ivan Rosenbaum?"

The prisoner replied sulkily, "Yes."

"You are an agent of Moscow?"

The prisoner refused to answer.

"On November 17th last you arrived at Sugden's Hotel in company with Mr. Hugh Radlett?"

The prisoner suddenly became voluble. "It is a lie, an infamous lie. I have never been to Sugden's Hotel in my life. I have met Mr. Radlett, indeed, but it was on the ship. We have travelled together to England, from Ostend, it is true. But the rest is lies, lies, all lies. Ah, it is infamous."

"Not so fast, Mr. Rosenbaum. You admit that you accompanied Mr. Radlett to England?"

"To England, yes. I have travelled with him at his invitation. But at Dover, gentlemen, we part. I see him no more. I hear of him no more till I read in your newspapers that he had been, how do you say, assassinated."

"Yes, by Jove, and it was you who killed him," Bunker broke in.

Rosenbaum smiled a rather pitying smile at Bunker, and turned to Wilson. "But, monsieur," he said, "I cannot make this gentleman understand. It is absurd. I am a Communist—what you call a Bolshevik. I avow it; I am proud of it. But do you not know that assassination is against the principles of my party? Mass action, yes: assassination, no—a thousand times no. Do you mistake me for a petit bourgeois conspirator? I am a Communist, gentlemen." He struck an attitude of proud defiance.

"What's the fellow talking about?" said Bunker. "Every one knows all Communists are murderers, if not worse. Come, my man, you'd better confess. You'll get justice here."

"I despise your justice. You insult my party—you

insult our Revolution. I will rise against you, yes. I will kill you in the war you wage against our Soviet. But I will not murder you. Murder—assassination—it is folly."

"Pardon, Mr. Rosenbaum," said Wilson. "I am loath to interrupt your interesting lecture, but we have business to do. You came to England with Mr. Radlett, you say, and you then stayed with him at Sugden's Hotel. Is that so?"

"It is false. Am I not telling you? I travelled with Mr. Radlett on the boat. I had met him at Moscow. He agreed to pass my luggage through with his. We had agreed to travel together. But I left him at Dover. I saw him no more. I never went to Sugden's Hotel. I can prove it. It is an infamous fabrication of the bourgeoisie."

"You say you agreed to travel with Mr. Radlett. Where did you meet him?"

"I joined him at Ostend. I wanted to get into England, and he agreed to help me by passing me through as his secretary. I had met him before at Moscow and at Paris, where I had been living, and he had agreed to do this. I was to wait for him at Ostend."

"So you travelled with him on the boat. When did you leave him?"

"As soon as my baggages were through the customs. I caught a train to Croydon, where I was to stay with a friend. Mr. Radlett travelled straight to London. I saw him no more."

"You say you can prove this. How?"

"By my friends, with whom I stayed the night in Croydon."

Bunker broke in, "What's the use of talkin' to the fellow, Wilson? He'll laugh the other side of his face when the other chaps identify him."

Then came a knock at the door before Wilson could answer, and Mr. Sacheverell, the porter at Sugden's Hotel, was ushered into the room. He had brought with him the boy in buttons who had been present at the discovery of the crime. Thomas, laid up with influenza, had been unable to come.

"Please sit down, Mr. Sacheverell," said Blaikie, placing a chair for the porter. The boy stood beside him.

"Now, Mr. Sacheverell, and you, boy," said the General, "take a good look at the prisoner."

The instruction was quite unnecessary. Both the porter and the boy were staring at Rosenbaum as if they had seen a ghost.

"Tell me," said the General majestically to the porter, "have you ever seen this man before?"

"Yessir," said the porter. "It's the foreign—gentleman what killed the millionaire."

"Can you swear this is the man who stayed at Sugden's Hotel with Mr. Radlett?"

"That's him, sir. I'd know him anywhere."

"Thank you," said the General. "And you, boy, do you confirm this—ahem!—identification?"

The boy was still looking open-mouthed at the prisoner. "I dunno, sir," he said at last. "Leastways, it looks like 'im, but it ain't."

"Do you dare to tell me this is not the man?" roared the General.

"No, sir," said the boy. " 'Cause t'other gent 'ad a crumpled ear, and this gent ain't."

"What's that?" said Wilson, sitting suddenly upright. "You say the other man had a crumpled ear. Do you mean Rosenbaum?"

"Yessir. I noticed it particular. This gent's got up all like 'im, 'xcept that, sir."

"You note that, Blaikie," said Wilson. He was plainly excited. The Inspector looked at him with an expression of surprise. But Wilson said no more.

"Boy," said General Bunker in a voice of thunder, "your evidence is worthless."

"Please, sir, I'm sorry," said the boy. "I didn't mean no 'arm, sir."

"Mr.—er—Sacheverell's evidence is quite enough," said the General. "At any rate," he added as there was another knock at the door, "we shall soon have ample confirmation."

"Mr. Culpepper, sir," said an attendant, ushering that resplendent little gentleman into the room.

Culpepper, as he entered, could not see the prisoner. But, as he caught sight of the porter and the boy and the group of officials beyond them, he gave a start. Smiling, however, he advanced into the room. Then it was he saw the prisoner, standing between the two warders, and looking curiously at him. "My God," he said, and sat down in the nearest chair.

"Mr. Culpepper," said the General, "do you recognise this scoundrel?"

Culpepper looked round with a bewildered air, and fixed at length a frightened glance on the prisoner. "What does it all mean?" he said helplessly.

"It means this," said Bunker, "that at last we have brought Mr. Radlett's murderer to book. Again I ask you, is this the man you saw with Radlett's murdered body in Sugden's Hotel?"

Culpepper cast another frightened look at Rosenbaum. "Yes," he whispered.

"Is this the man who compelled you to pack the body in a trunk, after threatening you with a revolver?"

"Yes," said Mr. Culpepper, still faintly.

"Did this man subsequently drug you, and conceal you in a cupboard?"

"Yes," said Mr. Culpepper, with more confidence.

"Lies, lies, all lies," shouted the prisoner, excitedly. "It is all a plot."

Bunker roared him into silence.

"Are you prepared to swear to these facts in a court of law?" asked Wilson.

"Y—yes, I suppose so," said Mr. Culpepper, with a return of panic.

"It's all right now, Mr. Culpepper," said the General condescendingly, with contemptuous tolerance of the little man's terror. "He can't hurt you, now. He is safe in my hands."

This speech ought presumably to have cheered Culpepper up, but it did not seem to have that effect. He looked as miserable as ever, and started violently again when Wilson suddenly put him a question.

"Has your daughter been to see you lately in England?"

Mr. Culpepper stared at the Superintendent in surprise. Bunker and the Inspector did the same.

"Why—whatever has that got to do with it?" said the little man at last.

"Never you mind. Answer my question."

"N—no. Not for some time, that is."

"Was your daughter in England at the time of Mr. Radlett's murder?"

This time Culpepper looked really alarmed. "N—no. Certainly not," he said. "She was in France, with my wife—and Mr. Pasquett."

"Why, Wilson, what on earth——" began the General.

"One moment, General," said the Superintendent. Then he turned again to Culpepper.

"Have you been to Poole lately?" he asked.

"I d—don't know what you're talking about," wailed Mr. Culpepper. "I—I've never been there in my life."

"Would it surprise you to learn that your daughter was in Poole three days ago?"

"I—it would surprise me very much. She is in France with her mother. I don't know what you mean."

"Would it surprise you to learn that your daughter was in Poole on the night of the murder, and motored up to London early on the morning of the discovery?"

"It's not true," Culpepper shouted, "she was in France with Mr. Pasquett."

"Don't get excited, Mr. Culpepper. You maintain, then, that you had no knowledge of your daughter's movements."

"I certainly have no knowledge of these absurd stories you are making up."

"We shall see about that. Now, do you adhere to the story you told when the crime was discovered, or do you wish to make any modification of it? I warn you that anything you say may be used in evidence against you."

"I protest, General Bunker. What am I charged with? Is there any charge against me?"

"Really, Wilson," said the General, "I don't know

where we are. Will you kindly explain what all this has to do with identifying this fellow?" He pointed to Rosenbaum, who, still standing between his two warders, had been anxiously following the colloquy.

"All in good time, General," said Wilson. "You ask, quite fairly, what you are charged with. I will tell you the exact position. There is no charge against you at present, but, unless you are frank with us, you will be charged with being an accessory to the murder."

"I, an accessory. Good God, what do you mean?"

"I mean," said Wilson, "that the whole story you told about the murder was a tissue of lies from beginning to end. I mean that this man Rosenbaum, whom you have pretended to identify, is not the man who committed the murder, and that you knowingly made a wrong identification. And, Mr. Culpepper, I know all about the uses you and your daughter make of a certain villa at Paramé, and of a very handy motor-boat you keep there. Is my meaning clear?"

Culpepper held his head down while Wilson was speaking, and avoided the eyes of the men before him. He was evidently thinking hard.

"I have not the slightest idea what you are talking about," he said at last. "The story I told after your Inspector found me at the hotel was absolutely true. That man Rosenbaum"—he pointed at the prisoner—"I positively identify as the man who committed the murder. And as for your accusations against my daughter, I throw them back in your teeth." The little man drew himself up proudly, and looked, not Wilson, but General Bunker, full in the face. "Do I understand, General," he went on, "that I am under arrest, or am I free to go?"

"'Pon my word, I don't know where we are," said

the General. "You say this man is Rosenbaum, and he says so himself. Isn't that plain enough?" The question was addressed to Wilson, who replied, "Yes, that's clear. Only, though this man is Rosenbaum, he is not the man who committed the murder."

"Then, in heaven's name, who did commit the murder?"

"Not so fast, General. That's a long story. But I think Mr. Culpepper could tell us if he chose."

"I tell you that man committed it," said Culpepper, nodding vigorously towards Rosenbaum. "I ask you again. Am I free to go?"

"For the moment, yes, Mr. Culpepper," said Wilson. "But I must ask you to hold yourself at the disposal of the police. I shall have more to say to you. Meanwhile, I warn you to keep me informed of your movements."

"I shall do nothing of the sort. There is no charge against me, I believe."

"Oh, if you prefer it, and will wait until I complete a few formalities, I shall be quite willing to arrest you. Would you like me to do that?"

"This, sir, is an outrage. I shall go at once to my lawyers, and place the matter in their hands." And Mr. Culpepper, as no one replied to this challenge, beat a hasty retreat from the room. As the door closed on him, Wilson seized the house 'phone, and gave swift orders that two men were to follow him, and he must not be lost sight of for an instant.

"Now, Wilson, will you please explain?" said Bunker when Wilson laid down the receiver.

"Hadn't we better dispose of Mr. Rosenbaum first? I don't think we need him for my explanation."

Bunker turned to the warders. "Remove your

prisoner to the cells," he said. "Left turn. Quick march."

"I shall want to see Mr. Rosenbaum later," said Wilson, before the little procession had left the room.

"I hope you will. You seem to be the only one who has any sense," said Rosenbaum.

"Silence," roared the General. "Silence," repeated the warders, as they passed through the doorway.

Bunker turned to the Superintendent. "And now, sir, what is this cock-and-bull story of yours? I arrest a murderer for you, when your incompetent department has failed to catch him, and all the thanks I get is that you trump up some infernal story about his not being the murderer, but another person of the same name and appearance. Culpepper identifies him; you accuse him of lying. But that fellow, what's his name—Sacheverell, identifies him, too. Was he lying? What do you say to that, hey?" Bunker positively bristled at the Superintendent.

"Of course I'm sorry, Bunker, if this disappoints you. But, remember, the boy didn't identify him."

"The boy. Pooh! Who cares for the boy?"

"The boy had noticed that the murderer had a crumpled ear. This man had not. Did that strike you?"

"The boy was romancing, of course."

"Did it occur to you to ask yourself whether any one else connected with this case had a crumpled ear?"

"My God?" said Inspector Blaikie, suddenly. "My God, do you mean that?"

"Well, Blaikie, who else has a crumpled ear?"

"John Pasquett," said Blaikie, very low. "Do you mean he did it?"

"I can prove that Pasquett was not in Paramé on

the night of the murder—in fact, that his *alibi* was a fake. I can prove that he left Poole in a motor-boat with Norah Culpepper on the day of the discovery, and that he arrived at Paramé in the boat during the ensuing night."

"And I thought you'd given up the case," said Blaikie.

"So I had, Inspector. I only kept it in the back of my mind. And, as I happened to be taking my summer holiday quite near Paramé——"

"Happened!" said Blaikie. "And I never guessed why you went there."

"I just thought I'd have another look round," said Wilson.

"Look here, Wilson," said the General, "it's easy enough for you to say you can prove all these things, but I've got my man, and you haven't. It's your man who's away in Russia now, ha ha. That's one up against you."

"It is," said Wilson. "I quite admit it. All this ought to have been found out at first. Blaikie and I are to blame that it wasn't found out. But that's no reason for hanging the wrong man."

"I've still only your word for it that he is the wrong man."

"Let me tell you exactly what I have found out." Then Wilson gave Blaikie and the General a concise account of his adventures and discoveries, both at Paramé and at Poole. Blaikie listened open-mouthed to the recital. He thought bitterly of the castles in Spain he had once built on his own prowess in handling the case.

"But," said Bunker, when Wilson had done, "all this is no proof that Pasquett committed the murder.

Pasquett may have been in England; but Rosenbaum was the murderer, even if Pasquett was concerned. You can't get away from Sacheverell's identification, even if you doubt Culpepper's."

"The Rosenbaum at the hotel," said Wilson, "had a crumpled ear."

"You mean he was really Pasquett," said Blaikie. "But somehow I can't believe Pasquett is a murderer. He didn't seem like a murderer."

"How can he be a murderer?" said Bunker. "I met him at dinner at Lord Ealing's—a very nice fellow. No, it was that Bolshie did it."

"Do you know," said Wilson, "that I, too, find it very hard to believe that John Pasquett is a murderer. But I can't get away from that crumpled ear. I'm very much afraid he is, though it upsets my judgment of human nature."

"He had the motive," said Blaikie, reflectively. "He and no one else."

"Yes," said Wilson gravely.

"But you've proved nothing, really," said the General.

Wilson turned to him a little contemptuously. "Why do you suppose I let Culpepper go?" he said. "If I had absolute proofs, shouldn't I have arrested him at once? No, I let him go because I want more proofs, and I rely on him to do something incriminating."

Blaikie nodded. "I thought that was it," he said.

"He'll certainly warn his daughter," said Wilson, "and we can fix to have any letters or telegrams opened at Paramé and read before they reach her. And, if I'm right, he'll probably try to warn Pasquett. And he may run away himself."

As we shall see, Wilson was right in some of his

guesses at what Culpepper would do, and wrong in others. He was not yet master of the little man's mind.

"Now, Blaikie," Wilson continued, "you must take this business of watching Culpepper in hand. See about getting letters opened, and all that, both at Paramé and here. And if he makes for France, you must go after him, and arrest him if necessary. But try not to arrest him, as long as he doesn't get clear away, until you can take him so as to make it plain he's trying to escape. Otherwise, he'll only plead a business journey. If he stays in England, and tries to brazen it out, I'll deal with him myself. But you're in charge of watching him."

"And what the devil am I to do with Rosenbaum while you're at your little games?" asked Bunker.

"Oh, hold him for the present. If we don't want him for the case, you can always deport him as an undesirable alien. That's one advantage with these Russians. There's no one to look after their interests. No fuss about *habeas corpus,* eh, General?"

"It would be a jolly good thing for the country if *habeas corpus* was repealed altogether," said the General savagely.

"Oh, I don't know," replied Wilson. "It would come very expensive if we let you imprison everybody. And what would you do for warders?"

"Don't play the fool," said Bunker. "You have no more public spirit than—than the Prime Minister."

"Sorry," said Wilson. "It is a shame I spoilt your perfectly good murderer. Come along, Blaikie."

Wilson and the Inspector left the General's room before, in his fury, he could think of an appropriate reply.

CHAPTER XXVIII

TREATS OF CONDUCT MOST UNBECOMING IN A NEPHEW

At the very moment when Mr. Culpepper was confronted with Rosenbaum, Arthur Wharton was in the middle of a very serious conversation with his uncle. Immediately after his conversation with Pasquett, in which he had expressed his determination, Arthur had sent off a long coded message to his uncle, telling in outline the mysterious discoveries he had made, expressing his grave doubts of "Pasquett's" identity, and announcing that he and "Pasquett" were returning immediately to England, where the latter had promised to produce incontestable proofs of his bona fides. He was writing, he said, with Pasquett's full knowledge and approval, and Pasquett's readiness to come back with him to England appeared to show sincerity. But the facts that had come to light in Siberia seemed to prove beyond dispute that the real Pasquett was dead, and he—Arthur—was no longer prepared to trust his own judgment, influenced as it was by his affection for Pasquett. The thing, he said, must be cleared up thoroughly; but in view of the big capital commitments into which the Anglo-Asiatic was entering, and of the fact that, if "Pasquett" was not Pasquett, the whole concession would be void, he had thought it incumbent on him to inform Lord Ealing at once. A short enclosure from Pasquett only said that Arthur

was mistaken, and asked Lord Ealing to take no action till the writer had met him.

How Lord Ealing received this message we are not privileged to know, but we may safely conjecture that it disturbed him seriously. He would be ruined now in real earnest if the concession fell through; for, confident of its overwhelming success, he had "put his shirt on it," as the phrase goes. So, it appeared, had the investing public. The shares of the Anglo-Asiatic and the new company boomed and boomed, and Lord Ealing was well aware that failure now, especially accompanied by revelations of a swindle, would be his ruin politically as well as financially. The furious investors would revenge themselves upon him, even if he was not the swindler.

We can only conjecture at Lord Ealing's sensations when he read Arthur's message. But this we can say positively: he mentioned not a word of the matter to any living soul. And we happen to know that he sold out just enough of his shares in the new company to assure himself of a competence if anything did go badly wrong. The proceeds he invested carefully abroad, under an assumed name and through Mr. Franklin, but he did not tell even his solicitor why he was taking this step. This done, he awaited the arrival of his nephew and John Pasquett with such patience as he could muster. The doubt about Pasquett's bona fides was the more annoying, because the Government might fall at any moment, and Lord Ealing had confidently looked for a high post in its successor, unless some most untoward accident occurred. The breakdown of the concession would be such an accident. It would blast all his hopes, alike of fortune and of office.

Meanwhile, the two men travelled fast from Siberia

to England, making the greater part of the journey by aeroplane. In Paris they stopped a day, for Pasquett said he hoped to find there certain friends who had known him in America in the old days, and would be prepared to swear to his identity. But his friends' apartment was shut up, and he could get no word of their whereabouts. Arthur wired from Paris announcing his arrival to Lord Ealing, and saying that he would come to see him on the following day.

When Pasquett failed to find his old friends, Arthur had decided to go straight on to London. He could not, he felt, do otherwise than see Lord Ealing at once. Pasquett, on the other hand, said he would go on to the Culpeppers' house at Paramé, both to fetch certain important papers and because they would be certain to know where his friends could be found. The two men therefore parted, not without a thought on Arthur's part that, if Jack was not really Pasquett, he was giving him a good chance of disappearing. He would not become partner to a deliberate swindle; but the last thing he wanted was to have a share in bringing his friend to justice. He hinted as tactfully as he could to Pasquett that, if he was really some one else, the sooner he got clean away the better. But Pasquett only laughed, and said he would follow Arthur to London, with full proofs of his identity, within a few days.

Arthur Wharton, therefore, went to see his uncle alone, with only this message from Pasquett. He found Lord Ealing looking far from well, a good deal careworn. He had gone straight to Lord Ealing's house on his arrival in England, and had been shown straight into his uncle's study.

He told Lord Ealing that he looked ill. But his uncle was in no mood for polite inquiries. Without

asking his nephew how he was, or how he had enjoyed himself, he came straight to business. "Now, tell me the whole story at once," he said, "about Pasquett, I mean. He is not with you?"

Arthur explained how Pasquett had gone to Paramé in search of the proofs of his identity, and would follow within a few days. "I wonder," said Lord Ealing. Arthur said nothing in reply to this comment, but plunged into a full account of his discoveries, of which he had written only a brief outline. Lord Ealing did not interrupt him once, save to get a difficult point clear, until he had heard the whole story. But several times he sighed.

"Now, Arthur," he said when the tale was told, "have you mentioned this matter to any one besides myself and Pasquett?"

"Not a soul, uncle. I wanted to give Jack every chance to clear himself."

"You did not even tell Alison?"

"No. No one knows a thing, except, of course, the Russian fellow who gave me the information."

"You realise that it is vital that not a word should be said to any one."

"Certainly, until we know for sure. Have you told the other directors?"

"My dear boy, I, like you, know when to say nothing. I have not mentioned it to anybody."

"Of course, if Jack isn't Pasquett, it will all have to come out. The concession——"

"Will it, Arthur? Will it have to come out? It seems to me it depends on you and me."

Arthur felt his heart thumping inside him. His head whirled. "Oh, uncle," he said, "but it must come out."

"Must it, Arthur? Suppose you and I say nothing about it?"

"But that would be swindling; we should have no right at all to the property."

"Who would have a right to it, Arthur?"

"Oh, I don't know. Radlett's heirs, whoever they are. Some charity in New York, isn't it? But how does that concern us?"

Lord Ealing spoke very earnestly. "Arthur, if this concession falls through, I shall be ruined, through no fault of my own. Absolutely ruined—politically, I mean. It is not only the money."

"I'm very sorry, uncle. But I can't help it, can I?"

"Yes, you can. By saying nothing."

"By taking part in a swindle. It's impossible," said Arthur, flushing.

"It's only a charity," said Lord Ealing. "And you and I are not swindling, as you call it. Most charities do more harm than good. You've often told me you have no time for charities. Let me see. Wasn't it 'Curse your charity' you used to say in your Socialist days? I tell you, if you care anything for your principles, you'll keep quiet. I know, and you know —it's obvious on the face of what you've told me— that this fellow has been swindling us. He's no more John Pasquett than you or I."

"I don't know that yet, uncle."

"Yes, you do; but you won't admit it. Well, just suppose it for a moment. Now, you, in the name of justice, say we must blurt out this swindle to all the world. I say it's our duty to hold our tongues. If we speak out, it's not only you that will lose a good salary, and I that will be ruined financially and have my political career blasted—oh, yes, I shall. I know. You

don't care for that. You talk about abstract justice and your conscience."

"I never mentioned either."

"But that's what is in your mind. Well, I ask you to think not of yourself or of me, but of the thousands —the tens of thousands, of people—poor people many of them, widows and orphans—who have put their money—perhaps their little all—into this enterprise. Think of them. Think what will happen to them when we have to tell the world that John Pasquett is not John Pasquett, and to admit that we have no right to the concession. All their money will be lost. Not just my money and your money. All their money—the savings of their lifetimes. Think of that. And it is you—you—who will be robbing them—if you speak."

Lord Ealing spoke with the moving eloquence which had often stirred a listening multitude in one of his great political harangues, or even raised a faint cheer in the House of Lords itself. His lordship was always deeply moved himself when he heard his voice at its best. He paused only to admire his own eloquence, and to give his concluding words their full effect.

"You will be guilty, Arthur, of all this, and you will be guilty of more than this. Is not this man—whether he be Pasquett or Pearson—your friend? Have I not seen your affection for him? Can I not see it now, when you are planning to expose him to the most terrible punishment? Would you send him to prison to mark your love for him? Would you betray your comrade for an impracticable theory that would ruin the world to-morrow if it were everywhere followed to its dreadful and logical conclusion! I ask you, Arthur, would you send your friend to imprisonment —perhaps—who knows?—to death?"

"To death? No, not to death," said Arthur, becoming melodramatic against his will under the influence of his uncle's rhetoric.

Lord Ealing returned suddenly from the heights to a plain, matter-of-fact tone. "My dear Arthur, has it escaped your acute mind that, if this man is not John Pasquett, it is more than probable he had a hand in Hugh Radlett's most opportune removal from the scene?"

"You would hush *that* up, if it were true?" said Arthur.

"Ah, I see it has not escaped your notice. Most certainly I would. I should so act as to further the greatest happiness of the greatest number," said Lord Ealing, virtuously. "And for you, if you care nothing for the poor people who have trusted us with their money, are you prepared to risk sending your friend to the gallows?"

"Oh, God, I don't know. Don't talk to me," said Arthur, miserably. "I don't see what else I can do."

Lord Ealing saw his advantage, and pressed it home. "I must talk to you, Arthur, because you are proposing to do a wantonly foolish and unnecessary thing. If you keep quiet, and say nothing, not a soul, except some purely hypothetical (I am not sure what Lord Ealing meant by "hypothetical," but it sounded well) —some purely hypothetical charity in New York will be a penny piece the worse. If you speak out, you will ruin a great many innocent people, you will strike a severe blow at your country's trade, and you will ruin your best friend, to say nothing of your uncle and yourself. Can't you see what a fool you are?" added Lord Ealing, letting a note of irritation creep into his voice for the first time. He sought to correct it by

saying, quite tenderly, "My dear Arthur, if your poor mother had been alive——"

"You dare mention my mother, and I'll hit you," said Arthur, with a sort of schoolboy ferocity. "And let me tell you what I think of you. I think you're an infernal scoundrel, though you are my uncle. I can see through you. You don't care a tinker's curse for Jack or for the widows and orphans you've been talking so much about. All you care for is your own beastly money and your own beastly reputation. D'you hear?"

Lord Ealing stared at his nephew. Could this possibly be the effect of his fine words? "I hear, you young fool," he said. "All the servants will hear, too, if you shout like that."

"And now," Arthur went on, more quietly but with intense anger, "I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to resign from all your damned companies at once, and I'm going to have no more to do with you—ever. But you're quite right. You've got me. I can't let Jack down, even if he has—whatever he has done. So, if it turns out he's a—impostor, I shan't tell. You understand me? I see you cheering up already, damn you. No, I shall keep quiet, but it won't be for your sake, you smug-faced hypocrite."

Arthur was usually so mild-spoken a person that this outburst was equally astonishing to Lord Ealing and to himself. Lord Ealing had gasped as the flood-gates of Arthur's eloquence opened, and helplessly let the torrent flow. But, as he realised the meaning of his nephew's words, and that he and the concession were safe, after all, he regained his self-possession on the instant.

"Resign and be damned to you," he said, "for a

foolish young prig. Arthur, you're an intellectual and a moral snob. Send Pasquett to me when he comes. You can get your salary from the office when you like and hand over to Mr. Benjamin. And now, get out." He walked to the bell and rang. An attendant appeared. "Show Mr. Wharton out," said Lord Ealing. Arthur went without another word. All the speech had gone out of him. He felt like a limp rag. He was sweating all over as he left his uncle's presence.

Lord Ealing poked the fire slowly as he stood in his great study alone. "Lord, that was a narrow shave," he said.

CHAPTER XXIX

IN WHICH MR. CULPEPPER WRITES A LETTER TO HIS DAUGHTER, AND LORD EALING IS A LITTLE PREVIOUS

Arthur Wharton went straight from his uncle's presence to the nearest telegraph office, and wired to Norah Culpepper at Paramé, telling her that Pasquett was not to come to London till he had seen him, and saying that he would start for Paramé at once on receiving news that Pasquett was still there, and would await his arrival. Within a few hours he got his reply, saying that Pasquett would wait for him, and adding that all was well. Arthur's telegram got through before the police surveillance over the house at Paramé had been established. Norah Culpepper's reply was copied by the French police and wired on to Scotland Yard. But, as we shall see, it did not mention Pasquett's name. Scotland Yard, therefore, was still in ignorance of Pasquett's return from Russia.

Other things, however, occurred to attract Superintendent Wilson's special attention to the villa at Paramé. As he had expected, Mr. Culpepper made a move. Seriously alarmed by the turn affairs had taken, the little man at first thought of making an immediate escape from the country. Once in France, he would be better able to watch events, to hide himself, and to make a final escape if this should prove to be necessary. Accordingly, he laid his plans. Less than an hour after he left Scotland Yard, Mr. Culpepper's confidential

clerk might have been noted on his way to Hendon Aerodrome with strictly private letters for the French branch of the firm and for Miss Norah Culpepper. He bargained for a passage to St. Malo, and was fortunate enough to find another gentleman who wanted to go the same way. He was unaware that this gentleman had followed him all the way from his master's office.

It was a fine day, and the aeroplane made a good passage. But at St. Malo the fellow-passenger caught a French policeman, and exchanged a few hurried words with him. Mr. Culpepper's clerk, much to his surprise, found himself seized and brought up for investigation by the authorities, already informed by telephone from England of Scotland Yard's requirements. They told the clerk that he was suspected of being an escaped embezzler, and that he must wait till the English police arrived to identify him. But they took his letters from him, and the telegraph speedily made Superintendent Wilson master of their contents.

There were two letters. One, addressed to Culpepper's Paris manager, instructed him to raise all the ready money he could by any means realise in twenty-four hours, and pay it over to Mrs. Culpepper, who would call in person for it the next day. It was needed, the letter said, for a big speculation. French money would do. The other letter, addressed to Norah Culpepper, deserves to be quoted in full:

"My Dear Norah,—The weather here does not suit me at all, and I propose to take a change at once. Will you ask your mother to go to Paris immediately and call at my office, where Simon will give her the ready money we shall need for our visit. Tell her to get it all. And I want you to motor over and pick me up, not at the old place—there are too many

people there for it to be convenient—but at the place you came to once before, which will mean a shorter journey. Give my love to your mother, and tell her that, though I am not at all well, the doctor thinks it may blow over even yet. But it is best to be on the safe side. Wire reply to me at X.'s.

"Your loving father,

"A. C."

Wilson chuckled as he read this little effusion. "Very neat, upon my word," he said to Blaikie, tossing the copy across the table. "That proves my guess was right. If Culpepper's whole story had not been a lie he wouldn't be planning to run away now."

"Unfortunately," said Blaikie, "this letter doesn't tell us much."

"All we want, Inspector. All we want. It gives me confirmation of my theory. And Culpepper can't escape. This letter has never reached its destination, and he'll be hanging on in hope of an answer. Not that our men would let him get out of the country if he tried. But I'll tell you what, Blaikie. I've still some work to do here, but you had better get over to Paramé at once and see that girl doesn't get away. I'll put Purvis in charge of watching Culpepper on this side, and let you know if he makes a further move. Don't arrest the girl till I come, unless you have to, but on no account let her escape. Get a warrant made out, and start at once. I'll probably join you to-morrow. And, before you go, give orders to have Culpepper arrested. We can do that safely, now he has given himself away."

"Then I'm not to arrest any one till you come?"

"Not unless you must. Of course, in any extremity,

use your own judgment. But there's not likely to be any difficulty. There has been nothing to give Miss Culpepper the alarm."

Blaikie hurried off to make his arrangements. He got warrants for the arrest of both Alfred and Norah Culpepper, and placed the execution of the former in the hands of one of his subordinates. Then he went to Hendon, where he had already ordered an aeroplane to be in readiness. He was in Paramé in the early afternoon.

His subordinate did not have such good luck. Mr. Culpepper somehow managed to slip out of his office unnoticed, using a stair which communicated with another building. He did not return, and there was no sign of him at his home. That astute gentleman was in fact, lying low, having made arrangements whereby any answer from Paramé would reach him indirectly, through the office of a friend. His sister at Enfield, in reply to police inquiries, stoutly denied all knowledge of where he was. Night fell, and day dawned again, but Mr. Culpepper had not been found by the police.

Wilson meanwhile, immediately after despatching Inspector Blaikie to Paramé, went to have his promised conversation with Rosenbaum, who was still in durance under the control of the Special Branch. His object was to make quite sure that Rosenbaum had not been present at Sugden's Hotel when the murder was committed, and, what was even more important, to clear up the mysterious connection which must somehow exist between Rosenbaum and the chief actors in the crime. Rosenbaum *had* travelled to England with Radlett, and if it was not Rosenbaum who was with Radlett at the hotel, it was undoubtedly some one got

up to look like him. If it was Pasquett, why had he dressed up as Rosenbaum, and how on earth had Radlett come to acquiesce in the deception?

Secondly, Wilson meant to see Lord Ealing, and to tell him of the dreadful suspicion under which his partner in the great concession lay. He wanted to do this, not out of friendliness for Lord Ealing, but because he hoped, by giving some information, to get some more and perhaps even to make Lord Ealing give himself away.

Wilson saw Rosenbaum first. Sensibly treated, the fellow was willing enough to talk. He denied being an agent of the Third International, and persisted that he had come to England on both occasions solely to visit friends. This was obviously untrue, but lack of frankness on this point did not matter to Wilson, who was only concerned with the Radlett case. With regard to this, Rosenbaum was very ready to talk. He soon convinced Wilson that he was telling the absolute truth, and that his horror at being suspected of the murder was perfectly genuine. He had not been near Sugden's Hotel, and had never heard of it, till he saw its name mentioned in the papers together with his own. He had thought then of giving himself up, but he said he had been afraid to do so, as the English police were so hard on Russians. Radlett he had met in Moscow, and had told of his desire to visit his friends in England. Radlett had offered to take him on as his secretary, and at a subsequent meeting in Paris had arranged to meet him at Ostend. He had crossed with Radlett, and they had parted on leaving the boat. He had told Radlett he would use an assumed name during his stay, but had not said what name.

Of Pasquett, Rosenbaum had never heard. Radlett

had not mentioned his name. He could not conceive how it had occurred that Radlett had arrived at Sugden's Hotel in company with another man disguised as himself. He had no idea who that man could be. He had escaped from Aberdeen in a Russian ship, as the police had already discovered. That was absolutely all he knew of the affair. He refused to say why, having once escaped from England, he had come back nine months later.

Wilson left him, convinced that he had learnt all Rosenbaum had to tell. He 'phoned to Lord Ealing's office, but was told that his lordship was at Berkeley Square. Then Wilson got into communication with him, and asked for an immediate interview. Was he right in thinking that there was a distinct hesitation in Lord Ealing's reply? At all events, he was asked to go round to Berkeley Square at once.

Wilson went. The impression that Lord Ealing was anxious was not removed when the two men met. There was a noticeable perturbation about the great man's manner as he asked Wilson to sit down. In fact, Lord Ealing was in a panic. Had Arthur "split," after all?

"There is some very grave news which I think I ought to communicate to you at once," Wilson began. "It is about Mr. Pasquett. At least, it concerns him." Was he right? Did Lord Ealing give a start of fear at the name, and with difficulty control his agitation? "I suppose, my lord, you have never doubted that Mr. Pasquett is—absolutely all right."

This time Lord Ealing was in better command of himself. "All right?" he said. "What do you mean?"

"I mean, you have never suspected Mr. Pasquett's bona fides?"

"Bona fides?" said Lord Ealing, repeating the Superintendent's words in order to gain time and further information.

"What I mean," said Wilson, "is that I have convincing evidence that Mr. Pasquett is not—what he seems. I have to-day secured evidence which seems to indicate—well—impersonation."

Wilson was referring to Pasquett's impersonation of Rosenbaum, but Lord Ealing very naturally mistook his meaning.

After this speech, he could no longer doubt. Arthur had split: all was over. What had he better do? Attempt to brazen it out? That would be useless. The only course was to make a virtue of necessity. He would tell the Superintendent, and pretend he had been going to tell him in any case. He would represent his interview with Arthur as having been all a joke. In short, he would play the noble victim—swindled by Pasquett's villainy. Perhaps, after all, he might save his reputation out of the wreck. All this flashed through Lord Ealing's mind. There was scarcely a perceptible pause before he answered.

"I was coming to tell you the whole story at once, Superintendent. My nephew has only been here to-day. Of course, until his arrival, I had not the remotest idea."

It was Wilson's turn to be surprised. What had Arthur Wharton to do with it? How had he found out that Pasquett was concerned in the murder? Had some one else been doing some private detecting on his own? Wilson determined to let Lord Ealing talk.

"Of course," his lordship went on, "the news will have to be made public at once. But I thought it only right to inform you first, as you will doubtless wish to

take action before anything is published. So glaring an imposture——"

"Imposture!" thought Wilson. "Does he mean Rosenbaum or something else?"

"So glaring an imposture will mean a long term of imprisonment, even if the fellow is not actually concerned in the murder. And it looks very much as if he was. At least, that is my opinion."

Wilson nodded, though he still could not make out what Lord Ealing meant.

"Of course," Lord Ealing went on, "this has been a great shock to me and to my nephew. Doubtless he has told you." His lordship looked keenly at Wilson as he said this, in the hope of discovering whether Arthur had given him, as well as Pasquett, away. But Wilson's face remained quite impassive, and he went on.

"I was thunderstruck, and shocked—shocked beyond measure. I had liked the man, I confess, and now, to discover that he is a mere impostor——"

"Impostor," thought Wilson. "A funny name to give to the crime."

"Stuns me—yes, stuns me. Arthur's discoveries, however, leave, I am afraid, no room for doubt. The man is not John Pasquett. He is a mere vulgar adventurer, who has deceived us all."

"What's that you say?" exclaimed Wilson, surprised into betraying himself. "Not John Pasquett? What do you mean?"

"Hasn't my nephew told you, then?" gasped Lord Ealing.

"I have not seen your nephew, my lord, and I shall be glad if you will explain what you mean. Do I understand you to say that you have discovered that

the man who calls himself John Pasquett is not John Pasquett at all?"

"Well — er — my nephew — that is — I mean—my nephew suspects that—doubtless a foolish suspicion—Arthur has taken an idea into his head——"

"Lord Ealing, will you kindly tell me in plain English what you mean?"

"My nephew," began Lord Ealing, controlling himself with a great effort, "has been here to-day. He——" Lord Ealing stopped suddenly, clutched the table before him, and sank into a chair. "One of my heart attacks," he gasped. "Get me some brandy. Will you ring?" It was magnificent acting; indeed, it was only half acting. Lord Ealing did feel distinctly unwell. But he also wanted to gain time.

Wilson did not ring the bell. Instead, he produced a flask from his pocket, and administered a stiff dose of brandy to the great man. Then he said, "When you feel well enough, please go on with your story. I will wait."

This remark brought on a fresh paroxysm. "My doctor says," Lord Ealing gasped, "dangerous in any excitement—these attacks—might be fatal. I must lie down." He tottered to a sofa, lay down, and closed his eyes.

Wilson was in a difficult position. He had no doubt that, if he chose to wait, he could in the end make Lord Ealing speak. But Lord Ealing was a very great man, and even Wilson hesitated to bully him. After all, he had committed no punishable crime, so far as Wilson knew. Though his reluctance to speak was very suspicious. That heart attack did not deceive the Superintendent.

Wilson walked to the window, and stood there for

a minute thinking. What Lord Ealing knew, apparently Arthur Wharton knew, too. It would pay him better to get it out of the nephew than to pump the uncle. Also, it would probably be much easier. He would seek Arthur Wharton at once, and catch him, if possible, before Lord Ealing had time to communicate with him. He went to the bell, and rang.

"His lordship has been taken ill," he said to the footman who answered his summons. "Will you look after him? I must go at once. Good-morning, my lord. I am sorry you are unwell. I will return when you are better."

He left the house, and, seeing a policeman at the corner, warned him to keep a watch and note carefully if Lord Ealing went out. He had a shrewd idea that his lordship's faintness would soon pass. Having set his guard, he hailed a taxi. Stopping at a call office, he gave orders to place a detective to shadow Lord Ealing. Then, hurrying back to his taxi, he drove straight to Arthur Wharton's flat.

CHAPTER XXX

IN WHICH ARTHUR KEEPS HIS WORD UNDER DIFFICULTIES, AND THE SUPERINTENDENT HAS A SUDDEN IDEA

Lord Ealing's indisposition lasted but a moment after the departure of the Superintendent. "It's all right, Pardoe, I'm better now," he said to the footman, rising to his feet. "Get me a brandy and soda, will you, and order the car at once." He moved swiftly to the telephone, and rang up Arthur Wharton's flat.

Arthur was putting together a few things in readiness for his departure to Paramé when his telephone bell rang. "Is that you, Arthur?" came the voice. "This is your uncle speaking. I must see you at once. It's very urgent. I'm coming round now in my car." Arthur was replying angrily that he had no desire to meet his uncle, when he realised that Lord Ealing had rung off.

He had half a mind to go out, or to refuse to see his uncle. On the other hand, he had better know what Lord Ealing wanted. He was still irresolute when there came a ring at his front door bell. He was alone in the flat, so he went to the door himself, and admitted Superintendent Wilson. Arthur looked at him with evident alarm.

"May I come in? I want a word with you," said Wilson, who was fully alive to the fact that he had no time to lose, as Lord Ealing might follow at any minute. "Your uncle, whom I have just left, informs me

that you have something to tell me about Mr. Pasquett."

Arthur looked at the Superintendent with an air of consternation. "My uncle told you," he exclaimed incredulously. "No, I have nothing to say," he added, lamely.

"Nothing to say, Mr. Wharton? Your uncle told me positively that you had discovered that the man who calls himself Pasquett is an impostor."

"Lord Ealing said that? It is not true," said Arthur, quite determined now to fight his friend's battle against all odds, even if his uncle, for some inconceivable reason, had let the cat out of the bag.

"Do you mean you did not tell Lord Ealing that Pasquett is not what he pretends to be?"

"Certainly, I did not."

"Just what did you tell Lord Ealing, Mr. Wharton?"

"I told him nothing—nothing that concerns the police," said Arthur, with a somewhat unsuccessful assumption of dignity.

"Come, come, Mr. Wharton. This won't do. You must be frank with me. I am investigating a criminal matter, and——"

"I have absolutely nothing to say. That is my last word."

There came another ring at the bell. "One moment," said Arthur, "I must go to the door." Wilson guessed whom he would find there. It was annoying to be interrupted so; but it was also a little amusing. He stole to the door and opened it an inch or so. He could hear plainly what was said. He heard Lord Ealing greet his nephew and ask to come in. "Superintendent Wilson's here," whispered Arthur in reply. "Damn!" whispered Lord Ealing. "Come out here

where he can't hear us." They moved out on to the landing, out of Wilson's hearing. Lord Ealing continued. "For God's sake don't tell him anything."

"But he says you told him and sent him to see me."

"It's all a mistake, Arthur. I mustn't come in if he's here. I half gave it away. You mustn't say anything. But he knows something, too. Find out what he knows. Only keep your own mouth shut."

"I will, but not for your sake. Go away," said Arthur, and shut the front door in his uncle's face. Wilson softly closed his door, and returned to his seat as he heard the front door bang.

"Only a tradesman," said Arthur, coming back into the room.

Wilson said nothing. He waited for Arthur. There was a long pause. At length Arthur spoke. "What are you waiting for? I told you I had nothing to say."

"I am waiting for you to change your mind, Mr. Wharton. After all, I know already. Lord Ealing has —let the cat out of the bag. I only want your confirmation."

"Then you won't get it," said Arthur.

"Mr. Wharton, I will be quite frank with you. I went to Lord Ealing to-day intending to give him certain very important information about Mr. Pasquett. Before I could tell him, your uncle jumped to the conclusion that I had seen you, and that you had told me what you are now refusing to tell. From what he let slip, I gathered quite clearly that you believed yourself to have clear proofs that the man calling himself John Pasquett is not John Pasquett at all, but an impostor who has assumed his name."

"That's not true," said Arthur. "I mean, I have no such proofs."

"That is as may be, Mr. Wharton. Now I am going to tell you what I meant to tell Lord Ealing this afternoon, and then you can decide whether you still refuse to give me your information."

"I don't want to hear," said Arthur.

"I have clear proofs," Wilson went on unperturbed, "first, that Hugh Radlett was not murdered by the man Rosenbaum; secondly, that Pasquett was in London on the night of the murder when he pretended he was in France; and, thirdly, that it was Pasquett who masqueraded as Rosenbaum at Sugden's Hotel."

Arthur sat very gloomily, saying nothing. When Wilson made his second and third points, he tightened his grip on the arms of the chair in which he sat, and his face went very white; but he made no other sign.

"I believe," Wilson went on, "that you are a friend of Pasquett's, and I want to tell you frankly that it is with the very greatest reluctance that I have come to suspect him of—murder. I have ascertained positively that he fled from London to France on the day when the crime was discovered. Shall I give you my proofs, and tell you the full story?"

Arthur still made no answer. Wilson therefore recounted, as shortly as he could, the gist of the discoveries he had made. "Now, Mr. Wharton," he concluded, "you must know that it is your duty to aid the ends of justice. Will you not tell me what it is you have found out?"

"No," said Arthur miserably. "I'm sorry, but I won't."

"You will have to, later. It is all bound to come out. Why not tell me now?"

"Sorry, Superintendent. It's no use. I won't. I've nothing to tell you."

Wilson rose. "Very well, Mr. Wharton. If you won't, you won't. But you are making quite unwarrantable difficulties. May I use your telephone?"

Without waiting for permission, Wilson lifted the receiver and called Scotland Yard. "I want you to send a man round here at once," he said, giving the address of Arthur's flat. "He is not to lose sight of Mr. Arthur Wharton, who lives here. Do you get that?" He hung up the receiver. "You see what you bring on yourself," he said. "I am bound to have you watched. Why not tell me?"

"No," said Arthur.

"When did you come back from Siberia, Mr. Wharton? I thought you were still there, till Lord Ealing told me."

"I only arrived back to-day," said Arthur.

"I suppose Mr. Pasquett did not come with you? Is he still in Siberia?" asked Wilson.

"No—I mean, he's not with me. He's still out of England—in Siberia," said Arthur. "He's in charge of everything there, you know."

"Well, if you won't tell me what you know, I suppose you won't," said Wilson. "Good-bye, Mr. Wharton." He held out his hand.

"Good-bye," said Arthur miserably, without taking it. Wilson found his own way out of the flat, and went back at once to Scotland Yard.

There he found more news awaiting him. On his desk lay a copy of the telegram sent by Norah Culpepper to Arthur Wharton. "Will wait. Come at once. Proofs ready," it ran. There was no signature, but it had come from Paramé. Wilson looked at the wire with a good deal of perplexity. "What proofs?" he asked himself. "And who 'will wait'? And why is

young Wharton to go to Paramé? Upon my word, this case gets more complicated every time one looks at it."

Wilson sat and thought. Surely this telegram must be an answer to one sent by Wharton himself. He rang up the telegraph authorities, and asked them to make search for such a message. They promised to look, and inform him at once of the result. Then, having received word of the fact that Culpepper had been lost sight of, and having said a few hard things to the man who had let him go, and instructed him to pursue his search if he valued his job, Wilson put the case temporarily out of his mind, and ran through a pile of correspondence that had lain on the table awaiting him.

He was still deep in this, when a message came through from the Central Telegraph Office. "We've found that telegram you wanted," came a voice over the 'phone. "It was sent by Wharton to N. Culpepper, Paramé. It runs like this, 'If Jack there tell him not come London yet. Am coming Paramé immediately. Await my arrival. Wharton.'"

Wilson started with surprise as he heard these words. Rapidly thanking his informant, he replaced the receiver and looked at his watch. The message could only mean one thing. Pasquett had come back from Siberia with Arthur Wharton: he was in Paramé at that very moment. There was not a minute to be lost. But the time! It was too late even to start for Paramé till the next morning. He must wire to Blaikie, telling him to arrest Pasquett and Miss Culpepper at once. But Blaikie had no warrant for Pasquett's arrest. Never mind. The French police would agree to detain him till Wilson could arrive with the warrant on the following day. Hastily, Wilson wrote a wire

and sent it off. "Pasquett at Paramé," he dictated, over the telephone. "Arrest him and Miss Culpepper at once. Am following with warrant early to-morrow. Wilson."

Then, late as it was, Wilson made up his mind to try to get his case complete before leaving for Paramé. He rang up Sugden's Hotel, and asked where Thomas, the attendant attached to Radlett's suite at the time of the tragedy, was to be found. The man, it appeared, was ill in bed at the hotel. "I'm coming round," said Wilson to the manager, "and I want you to keep that boy for me—the one who came to Scotland Yard this morning. I shall need him."

The Superintendent drove to the hotel, and interviewed Thomas in the garret where he lay ill. "I have only one question to ask you," he said. "You remember the man Rosenbaum. Did you notice anything peculiar about his ears?"

"Just a minute, sir," said Thomas, closing his eyes, "I can see it in my memory better that way," he explained. "Yes, sir," he replied confidently. "Rosenbaum had a malformation of the left ear."

Wilson's heart leapt. It was the left ear, then.

"What sort of a malformation?" he asked.

"The top part was sort of crumpled up. I noticed it when I saw him at the writing-table."

Wilson thanked the man, hoped he would soon be well again, and left him. It was Pasquett's left ear that he had described. Descending the stairs, he sought the manager. "About that boy," he said. "I want to borrow him for a day or two. To identify the murderer."

Mr. Mounteagle protested that it was most inconvenient, but at length he gave way, and sent for the

boy, who appeared, wondering what he had done wrong.

"Now, my lad," said Wilson, "you remember the man with the crumpled ear."

"I should think I did," said the boy. "'Im as did the other gent in."

"I want you to come with me and identify him."

The boy looked at the manager, who nodded.

"What do you say to a little trip to France?" said Wilson.

The boy first looked at him incredulously, and then, seeing that he was serious, forgot all discipline and executed a sort of war dance round the room. "Hip, hip, hooray," he said. "What price me now. *Parlay voo frongsay?* Beggin' your pardon, sir," he added, seeing the horrified face of the manager.

"Boy," said Mr. Mounteagle, in a voice of mingled anger and torment, "think where you are. This is *Sugden's Hotel.*"

Wilson arranged that the boy should meet him at Hendon in the morning, as he meant to fly over to France. This added further to his delight. It was a very happy youth who was hurried off to bed in preparation for the great adventure of the morrow.

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Before leaving Sugden's Hotel, Superintendent Wilson 'phoned to the aerodrome to make sure of an early passage. When he mentioned his destination, the man at the other end laughed. "How many more of you?" he asked. "There's five special planes gone off to St. Malo to-day already."

"This is Scotland Yard speaking," said Wilson. "Please tell me who the passengers were."

The man went away to consult a book. "The first was one of your men," he said, "Inspector Blaikie. The second was a Mr. Wharton, then came another of your men, Detective-Sergeant Slocombe. The fourth was Lord Ealing. He left half an hour ago, with Sergeant Merrilees close behind him."

Wilson thanked the man for his information. "We shall indeed meet at Philippi," he said to himself.

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His day's work, however, was not yet done. As he walked away from Sugden's Hotel towards Scotland Yard, where he meant to pass the night on the folding bed he kept at his office, he was thinking hard about the case. Although by this time its main outlines seemed fairly clear, he was not yet satisfied. Logically, his proofs seemed nearly complete. He could prove positively that Pasquett was the "Rosenbaum" of the hotel, and that would assure him of a verdict. But what on earth was this story of Pasquett not being Pasquett, but some one quite different? That meant forgery as well as murder. It was quite possible. Not one of them had known Pasquett, or what he looked like, till he turned up some days after the crime. And, if Pasquett was not Pasquett, that would explain how he had been able to palm himself off on Radlett as Rosenbaum. Or, at least, it would help to explain. It was still a mystery how Radlett, having parted from one Rosenbaum at the customs office, had turned up with a quite different Rosenbaum at the hotel.

But stay. It was not true that no one had known Pasquett till he turned up after the crime. The Cul-

peppers had known him. But, of course, they were in the plot.

It was at this point in his thinking that Wilson suddenly stood still in the street, and said, quite unconscious that he was speaking aloud, "My God, what a fool I've been! I never thought of that." A passer-by, who had stopped under the impression he was being addressed, said, "I beg your pardon," and looked at Wilson oddly when he said it was nothing.

He thought of that a great deal more during the rest of his walk and after his arrival at Scotland Yard. And it caused him to do quite a number of things. In the first place, he sent for the trunk which he had found at the house in Grosvenor Walk, and made a minute examination of the inside, sweeping it out carefully and studying the sweepings through a microscope. Then he sent for a car, and drove straight to Grosvenor Walk itself. The house was now occupied, and Wilson, stating his vocation, asked to be allowed to examine the garden. He was admitted, and what he did was to walk about with an electric torch, which he switched particularly on to the pleasant rockery which the previous tenant had stocked with rare Alpine plants. What he found there apparently pleased him; for he returned in a few minutes with something heavy wrapped up in his evening paper. He then went back to Scotland Yard, and locked his find carefully away in his safe.

Next he sent for all the papers found in Radlett's room after the crime, and sat up half the night studying them. He paid particular attention to Radlett's story of his life, printed earlier in this narrative, and again the result of his researches seemed to please him

vastly. It was past one o'clock when, having filed the papers carefully away, he lay down on his bed to get a few hours' sleep. The last thing his eyes lighted on as he switched off the electric current was the trunk. He chuckled softly, as he turned over and composed himself to sleep.

CHAPTER XXXI

IN WHICH A LOVER'S IDYLL IS RUDELY INTERRUPTED, BUT JOHN PASQUETT IS EQUAL TO THE OCCASION

Norah Culpepper was singing a little French song as she tended her roses in the garden at Paramé.

"Il était un roí d'Yvetot,
Peu connu dans l'histoire,
Se levant tard, se couchant tôt,
Dormant fort bien sans gloire.
Et couronné par Jeanneton
D'un simple bonnet de coton,
Dit-on."

The singer paused.

"Oh, oh, oh, oh, ah, ah, ah, ah!
Quel bon petit roi c'etait là
La, la."

answered a man's voice from the roadway.

Norah turned sharply round, and put her hand to her breast. "Jack," she said.

"Darling," said Pasquett, freshly arrived from Paris. They embraced.

"I thought you were in Siberia," she said, when her mouth became disengaged.

"This is a little surprise for you," said Pasquett. "And it's not for long. I must go to England tomorrow."

"You'll come back. You're not going to Siberia again."

"I'm taking you with me this time, my dear. Will you come?"

They kissed again. "What a baby it is," she said.

They went on like that for some time.

"The Rustons are staying in Paramé," she said at length.

"I'm in luck," said Pasquett. "They're the very people I'm looking for."

"I thought you came to see me?"

"Don't be a goose. But I want them, too. Want them badly."

"Whatever for?"

"You know young Arthur Wharton. He's got it into his head that I'm not John Pasquett at all, but some one else."

"Some one else. Who else? Not——"

"Oh, no. No one in particular. You see, unfortunately, he came across my death certificate in Siberia."

Norah laughed. "Oh, that." Then she became serious. "Does it matter?"

"No, only I have to prove to the young ass that I really am who I am. That's what I want the Rustons for."

"Won't I do?"

"He might not believe you. He knows you're in love with me."

"You're mighty sure about it, Mister Pasquett."

"Quite, darling. So's every one who sees you with me. Are the Rustons in?"

"They're out for the day. They'll be back this evening."

"Then we can have an hour or two to ourselves. Except that I must find that old photo album."

"What? The one with all the photos of you? I've got that."

"You would have."

"Yes, I love it. There's every conceivable photo of you in long frocks, short frocks, in your little blouse and knickers, right till you become a big grown man. I keep it under my pillow every night."

"Liar."

"Well, perhaps not every night. What do you want it for?"

"To show young Arthur. No one could mistake the evolution of my beauty. It's proof positive."

"You always did have an enormous mouth. And that absurd ear." Norah kissed his left ear, little conscious that it had already betrayed her lover to the observant eyes of the boy in buttons. "I love my cow with the crumpled horn," she chanted.

All of a sudden she became serious. "My dear," she said, "I quite forgot. You know that man, Superintendent Wilson. He's been here again."

"Been here? Whatever for? When was he here?"

"Only a day or two ago. He saw mother, and I'm sure he's been poking about here for something."

"What could he know, darling? Surely they've dropped the case—unless Lord Ealing has put the cops on me. And that won't matter if it's only the question of identity that's worrying them."

"Mother says he would talk about nothing but south coast watering-places, and how he'd seen me at one of them. Of course, she didn't give anything away. And there was a little boy who I'm sure was spying on

me, and when I asked him who he was he said his name was Pasquett."

"It may have been, darling. I'm not the only Pasquett in the world. And why should he say it was if it wasn't?"

"I don't know, but I feel sure there was something wrong. Mr. Wilson pretended he was just taking a holiday over here, and had dropped in for a friendly call."

"Perhaps he was, darling. Don't you get worried. I don't see how they can possibly know anything. And they think I'm safe in Siberia."

Norah hoped Jack was right, but she could not help worrying. Her lover, on the other hand, seemed too pleased to be with her again to attend very closely to anything else. He laughed at her fears. Even Norah soon put them by in her joy at her lover's return. Even criminals—if these friends of ours are criminals—must make love very like ordinary people.

The Rustons came round that evening. They were very old acquaintances of Pasquett's, who had introduced them to the Culpeppers in Paris. They had known him in America, and could swear to his identity. Moreover, they knew where others who had known Pasquett in the old days could be found. The Thomas's in Fulham would readily confirm what they said. Mr. and Mrs. Ruston agreed to travel to London on the morrow with Pasquett, and put matters right with Arthur Wharton and Lord Ealing.

But, when the morrow came, Pasquett found it hard to leave Norah so soon. "Why not one day more?" he asked himself. He could travel the next day. Arthur would not expect him sooner. So he was still in

Paramé when Arthur Wharton's telegram reached him on the afternoon following his arrival. He and Norah were out in the motor-boat when it came. They returned very late for dinner and found it. "Hurrah, another day's reprieve," said Pasquett. "But I wonder what all the fuss is about."

The happy party at Paramé was quite unconscious that day of the evils gathering round it. Norah did, indeed, notice the aeroplanes flying over the sea, and supposed "there must be a race on, or something." Pasquett was far too busy enjoying himself to bother his head about aeroplanes. "I dare say," he said.

They did not know that the first aeroplane, starting from Croydon, deposited at St. Malo Mr. Culpepper's confidential clerk and the detective who was his travelling companion. They did not know that a vitally important letter for Norah from her father was lying in the police station at St. Malo, or that its contents had been communicated to Scotland Yard. They did not know that the unfortunate clerk lay a few miles off in prison, unable to send out any message. They did not know that, in swift succession, Inspector Blaikie, Arthur Wharton, another detective, Lord Ealing, and yet another detective were flying across the Channel to disturb their tranquillity. They did not know that before evening, there was a detective in the copse behind the house, another hiding behind a boat on the beach, and a French police patrol boat lying in readiness round the next headland. They knew very little indeed, except that they were in love with each other.

Inspector Blaikie, with the aid of the French police, had set this watch immediately on his arrival, and himself watched the return of the lovers in their boat,

and its safe bestowal in the boathouse. But the distance was too great for him to recognise Pasquett, whom he believed to be still in Siberia. Concealed in one of the cottages where he had engaged a room with a commanding view, Blaikie saw Arthur Wharton hurrying along the road that led to the villa, and saw the door close upon him. Three-quarters of an hour later, Lord Ealing drove up in a hired car, and he, too, disappeared into the house. The detective who had followed them reported to Blaikie, who sent the man into St. Malo to hire, if he could, a second motor-boat, in which Blaikie and his fellows would be able, if necessary, to take up the chase. The Inspector, as we have seen, had orders to make no arrest unless the inmates of the villa attempted to escape. Impatiently, he awaited Wilson's coming. He could not make out what Arthur Wharton and Lord Ealing were doing at the villa.

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We, fortunately, are privileged to enter, and to see for ourselves. Old Marie had gone home, and it was Pasquett himself who opened the door to Arthur Wharton on his arrival. He began a hilarious welcome, and then saw Arthur's woebegone face. "Why, whatever is up?" he asked.

"Everything," said Arthur. "Ten to one a damned detective has followed me here, though I've done my best to give him the slip. Everything's discovered, Jack. You must fly at once."

"What the devil do you mean?" said Pasquett.

"Superintendent Wilson knows everything."

Pasquett drew Arthur into a room and shut the door. "Now," he said, "tell me what you mean."

"I told Lord Ealing about my—my doubts, and he somehow let it out to Wilson. And——"

"Oh, if that's all," said Pasquett, greatly relieved, "it doesn't matter in the least. I can prove to you or anybody else in five minutes that I'm who I always said I am."

"Never mind who you are, Jack. That's neither here nor there—now. It isn't that."

"Then what is it?" The colour had gone from Pasquett's face, but he retained his self-possession.

"Wilson says he can prove that you were in London when Radlett was murdered, and that you escaped to France the morning of the discovery."

"My God, that is serious."

"He has found it all out, except that you are back in Europe. I told him you were still in Siberia."

"You're a good friend, Arthur. I wonder how the devil he found out."

"So it's true," said Arthur. "I so hoped it wasn't true. Oh, Jack, you must fly at once."

"Looks a bit like it; but it's easier said than done."

"Then you did do it, Jack. I'd been hoping against hope you didn't. You killed him?"

Pasquett stared at Arthur. "Good God! You think I killed poor Hugh. Of course, it's quite natural you should. I suppose Wilson thinks so, too. No, Arthur, I didn't kill him."

"Then you needn't fly. You can stay and tell them the truth. It's all a hideous mistake."

"No, Arthur, I must fly, just as much as if I'd killed him. You see, I did—something else. I was there—at Sugden's Hotel. If I'm caught—no, I mustn't be caught."

"I don't understand, Jack. You say you didn't kill

him. Yet you were there. Do you mean he isn't dead?" said Arthur, with a sudden hope dawning upon him.

"No," said Pasquett. "He's dead, poor chap."

"Then who did kill him? What did you do that you have to fly all the same? Oh, Jack, tell me all about it."

"My dear Arthur, I can't tell you now. There's no time to be lost. I will when I get a chance. I don't think you'll blame me much, when you know. But it's a long story. Do you say there were detectives following you?"

"Wilson put men on to watch me. Of course, I hope I gave them the slip. No one knows you're here."

"Hm. Not unless the police have got hold of your wire to me, or mine to you. The chances are they will soon, even if they haven't already. That means there's not a minute to lose. I must tell Norah. We must fly together. Perhaps there's still time. Look here, Arthur. I'm going upstairs first. There are windows there from which I can get a good view. I want to see if the house is being watched already. You didn't notice anything as you came along?"

"No, Jack, I don't know what I ought to do."

"You stay there, Arthur, and keep cool. I mean to get out of this if I can."

"As long as you didn't—kill him——"

"Of course I didn't kill him. Stay where you are. I'll be back in a minute." Pasquett dashed upstairs, leaving Arthur to stare moodily out of the window along the empty sea front.

Yet not quite empty. A car came towards the house at full speed, and stopped at the door. Lord Ealing leapt out, and told the driver to wait. Arthur, after

an instant's hesitation, went to the front door and admitted his uncle. "What the devil are you here for?" he asked. "Come in here," he added, and let his uncle into the room Pasquett had just left. "What do you want now?" he said truculently.

"My dear Arthur, keep cool. I want to see Mr. Pasquett."

"He's not here. He's—gone."

"Gone? Where?"

"Away. For good."

"Whatever do you mean? You didn't tell that policeman?"

"I didn't tell him anything. He told me."

"He told you? What?"

"That he had proof positive that Jack murdered Hugh Radlett. But he didn't. Only——"

"My God," said Lord Ealing. "So that's it, is it? Can he prove it?"

"How do I know? He says he can. But it's not true. It can't be true."

"And what are you doing here?"

"I came to tell Jack to fly at once."

"And Mr. Pasquett has taken your advice, has he? Well, it's best so, perhaps."

"What did you come here for? You didn't come to warn Jack, did you?"

"I came to have a little talk with Mr. Pasquett, and find out just how things stood."

"He says he can prove he is Pasquett. Has the proofs here, in fact. But it doesn't seem to matter now, does it, who he is?"

"A murderer hangs as well by any name, no doubt."

"No, no. Jack swears he didn't kill Radlett."

"Then what has he run away for?"

"He hasn't run away, yet, Lord Ealing," said Pasquett's smooth voice. He had entered the room just in time to hear Lord Ealing's question.

"The police are all round the house, Arthur," he added. "I saw that fellow Blaikie distinctly with my field-glass."

"Then you can't get away. What *shall* we do?"

"Look here, Pasquett," said Lord Ealing, "if that's your name——"

"It is, my lord," said Pasquett.

"I came here to find out who you really are, and now Arthur tells me that, in addition to being an impostor, you are a—murderer."

"I never said anything of the sort, uncle," said Arthur.

"At all events, he told me the police very badly want you on a charge of murder," said Lord Ealing.

"So he informs me. I was not aware of it till now."

"Upon my word," said Lord Ealing, "you take it coolly. Are you aware that this will ruin, not only me and the Anglo-Asiatic, but some thousands of people who have put their money into this infernal concession? Are you——"

"I have not ruined you *yet,* Lord Ealing."

"What do you mean, sir? If this murder charge is proved, what becomes of the concession? That's what I want to know."

"What I meant, Lord Ealing, was that, as I have not ruined you *yet,* I rely on your helping me to get away."

Lord Ealing's fury changed to fear in an instant. "What's that?" he said. "What do you mean?"

"I was referring to a little incident which doubtless remains in your lordship's memory. When my friend

Hugh Radlett was at Sugden's Hotel, you addressed a private letter to him there. In it, you referred to a certain little scheme which you had concocted between you—own brother to a trick you subsequently played off on me. Radlett had reached a private understanding with you that he was going to take up the concession jointly with the Anglo-Asiatic. But you suggested that he should give it out temporarily that he was not coming in, in order that the shares might slump, and you and he both make a pretty penny by buying them when they were down. You also offered, in return for a big block of unpaid shares in the new company, to guarantee that the Foreign Office would sympathetically consider the question of recognition. I see you remember the letter. Does your lordship wish to see it published?"

"How the devil did you get hold of that letter," said Lord Ealing, "if you're not the murderer? You killed Radlett, and stole the letter from his room."

"As a matter of fact, Lord Ealing, I did not kill Hugh Radlett. But suppose I did. At any rate, I am in possession of your letter, and, if I am caught, it will certainly fall into the hands of the police. I shall see that it does, and that it is published in the newspapers. Will you like that, my lord?"

"I'll give you a thousand pounds for that letter," said Lord Ealing.

"Oh, no. It is not to be bought," said Pasquett, "not with money. These are my terms. You will give me any help in your power, even at a risk to yourself, in escaping from the police. If you do as I tell you, the letter will be handed to you when your part in the affair is over. You will then be free to destroy it. But till then it will remain in my keeping or that of

my friends. If you refuse, I shall send it to the newspapers at once, and hand the original to the man who attempts to arrest me. Is that your choice?"

Arthur had stood tongue-tied, listening in astonishment to this dialogue. He was learning more about Lord Ealing these last few days than he had ever learnt before in all his life.

"Shall I publish?" Pasquett repeated.

Still Lord Ealing said nothing. He simply stared at Pasquett as if he would like to kill him.

"No, I thought not," Pasquett went on. "In that case, your lordship will be good enough to wait here until we have decided how you can best help in our escape. Don't run away, Lord Ealing. The letter will be published if you do. It is merely a little matter of business between us. Sit down and think it over. Come, Arthur." And Pasquett walked out of the room. With a doubtful glance at his uncle, standing immobile in the middle of the room and staring at nothing, Arthur Wharton followed his friend.

"Now, Arthur," said Pasquett, "we must hold a council of war. Will you come to it? They all know what's in the wind."

"I'll come, Jack. I believe you didn't kill him."

"That's right," said Pasquett, leading the way into the drawing-room of the villa.

There Arthur found quite a company assembled. Norah Culpepper was there with her mother, who was whimpering in a corner. And there were a strange man and woman, whom Pasquett introduced to him as Mr. and Mrs. Ruston. Norah rose as they entered, and came and took Pasquett's hands in hers. She seemed the calmest of them all.

"I have a plan," said Pasquett. "I'm sorry, Ruston,

to drag you into this, especially as you don't know what it's all about. The police are after me for murder. I give you my word I'm not a murderer. I haven't killed any one. Norah knows that, and Mrs. Culpepper. But I have very good reason for not meeting the police. If they catch me, I stand a good chance of being convicted, not for murder, but for something else that would mean a good long sentence. So does Norah, and Mr. Culpepper, if they catch him." There came a loud sob from Mrs. Culpepper in the corner. "Now, if you choose, you can walk straight out of this house, and have no more to do with me. I shan't blame you. On the other hand, you can help me, if you're game to take a bit of risk."

Ruston obviously hesitated. He turned towards his wife.

"It's all right, old chap," said Pasquett. "I shan't take it amiss if you refuse."

"What's it all about?" said Ruston. "I think I ought to know that before I make up my mind."

"It's this," said Pasquett. "You've heard of Hugh Radlett, who was murdered a few months ago and whose money came to me." Ruston nodded. "The police think I killed him. Norah here will tell you I didn't. He was my best friend, you know. I wouldn't have hurt a hair of his head."

"Then why run away?" said Ruston.

"Because, though I didn't kill him, I could only prove that I didn't by proving myself guilty of another crime that would get me a good many years hard. Now, do you see?"

"Do you mean you did commit the other crime, whatever it was?" Ruston asked.

"Yes, I did. It was not a crime in my eyes; but in

the eyes of the law—it would mean something pretty severe. And Norah was in it, too. If we're caught, either of us——"

"Oh, they mustn't be caught," said Mrs. Ruston. "Help them, dear."

"Thank you, Mrs. Ruston. But it's dangerous, I warn you, though I have an idea."

Ruston took Pasquett's hand. "We were boys together," he said; "you once saved my life. I'm game. What is it?"

"Didn't you say a ship of yours was sailing from Havre to-morrow morning? Yes, I thought so. I want you to send a message to that ship to cruise off this coast out of sight of land—say off the southernmost point of Alderney—ready to pick up two people in a motor-boat and ask no question. See the idea?"

"I see. Fortunately the ship carries no wireless, and she's bound straight for Odessa. You mean to go off in the motor-boat and join her?"

"Yes, with Norah. It's the only chance. The police are all round the house now. Of course, we may not be able to get away in the boat. They may rush the house sooner. But it looks as if they're holding back for something. I mean to try about midnight. What do you say, Norah?"

"Yes, I see no other chance," said Norah slowly. "And if the police have a boat, it's not very much of a chance."

"Unless we can get away unseen in the dark," said Pasquett.

"They're bound to hear the engine."

"Then we must take the risk. If we once get away, they'll have a job finding us."

"But how am I to get in touch with my ship?" said

Ruston. "If I go, the police will be after me, sure as fate. And they'll find out about my connection with the ship, and send a fast boat after you, and catch you."

"I've provided you with a messenger, Ruston. Lord Ealing will take the message."

"Lord Ealing! He is helping you to escape?"

Pasquett laughed. "He has the best of reasons for not betraying me. And for not being followed to Havre by the police. Here, Ruston, I want you to take charge of this letter. Read it." Pasquett handed Ruston Lord Ealing's letter to Hugh Radlett.

Ruston read it. "Whew," he said, "that would make some stink if it came out."

"If Ealing betrays me, I rely on you to get that letter published in the newspapers. If he plays the game, you will hand it to him when he comes to claim it. Don't tell a soul you've got it, of course."

"Then Lord Ealing is to be my messenger, is he? I'll write now." Ruston sat down and wrote a short note to the captain of his ship, bidding him get away from Havre the first thing in the morning, and cruise off the southernmost point of Alderney till he picked up two people in a motor-boat. If he saw no sign of them by dusk on the following day, he was free to continue his voyage. "Ask no questions, and destroy this letter," Ruston concluded. "My friends are passengers to Odessa, at my expense."

"He's a discreet chap, and devoted to me," said Ruston. "He'll do it, never fear." He read the letter aloud, and handed it to Pasquett.

"I'll give it to the messenger boy at once," said Pasquett. He went in search of Lord Ealing.

A few minutes later, they heard Lord Ealing's voice

in the hall, and Pasquett's cheerfully wishing him "bon voyage." Then came the sound of his motor starting. A minute later, Pasquett came back into the room. "That's done," he said. "I warrant he'll do his best, as if the devil was after him. He'll come to you for his letter, Ruston, when we've gone. And now, darling, we must prepare for our voyage."

For the next hour there was a bustle of preparation. Pasquett and Norah Culpepper packed up a few things to take with them. They stole round to the boathouse, and tended the boat as carefully as for a race, oiling every part of the engines in preparation for their voyage. But in an hour all was ready, and it was still far too light to make a start. "We must wait till nearly midnight," said Pasquett, "even though it means the danger of their rushing the house meanwhile."

"We are thinking of slipping off home, unless we can be of any use," said Ruston.

"No," said Norah. "We want you. Our car's in the garage. There are sure to be police watching the boathouse and the shore. Just before we slip away in the boat, it will help enormously if you two drive off in the car from the other side. Make as much noise as you can, and all the police will rush for you, thinking it's Jack and I, trying to get away. Meanwhile, we shall get a start in the boat. Do you see the idea? There's really no danger in it for you, is there?"

"Oh, we'll do it," said Ruston. "Eh, Helen?" Mrs. Ruston agreed.

"Then that's that," said Pasquett. "You're real friends."

"And now," said Norah, "I'm going for a stroll."

"Going for a stroll?" said Arthur, incredulously. "You'll be seen."

"Precisely," said Norah. "I want to be seen. I'm afraid of those policemen getting nervous, and being afraid I've got away somehow. If I take a quiet stroll along the beach, without hat or coat, they'll know I'm here, and, what's more, they'll be quite sure I don't know they're here. Moreover, I want to see if they've got a boat."

"But they may arrest you." It was Mrs. Ruston who spoke.

"I don't think so," said Norah. "Why haven't they done so already? No. They're waiting for something or somebody. I think it's safe enough. I won't go far—only along the beach. I won't be out ten minutes."

"Let me come with you," said Arthur, and Norah welcomed the suggestion.

So Arthur Wharton and Norah went, hatless and coatless, into the garden, and strolled down on to the beach. Pasquett watched them, standing well back, from a window; he was nervous, though he had agreed that Norah should go. If the police were after all to arrest her, he would give himself up too. He could not bear to go away and leave Norah to take the consequences of their joint misdeeds.

The two figures passed out of sight beyond the little group of boats from whose shelter Wilson had once watched the villa. Pasquett became yet more anxious, despite himself. He had seen a hasty consultation going on outside the cottage just above the place where the boats lay. Blaikie was resisting the eagerness of his French helpers to effect an immediate arrest. "She can't get away," he said. "I don't want her arrested yet." The Frenchmen shrugged their shoulders, and clamoured in vain.

Then Norah and Arthur reappeared, still walking unconcernedly along, this time towards the villa. In a few minutes they were back in the house. "There's a French police boat just round the bend," said Arthur.

"I know her," said Norah. "She's not so fast as ours."

"And Inspector Blaikie's in the cottage just above," said Arthur.

"So now we know the lie of the land," said Pasquett, cheerfully. He turned to Mrs. Culpepper. "Mother, give us a square meal before we start. We shall need it."

Norah went away to help her mother prepare supper. The Rustons were still in the drawing-room. Arthur drew Pasquett aside.

"Jack," he said, "you've time now. Tell me—what really happened. I must know—if I'm to help you."

"Right you are," said Pasquett. "I'll tell you the whole story."

And he did.

But that will keep—though perhaps the intelligent reader has guessed it already.

CHAPTER XXXII

SHOWS HOW TOO MANY POLICEMEN SOMETIMES SPOIL THE BROTH

Mr. Culpepper had arranged that his confidential clerk, as soon as he had delivered the letters at Paramé, should wire a reply, not to his own office, but to that of a friend, and in a form that would arouse no suspicions in the minds of the police. The "dress-lengths," he was to say, had arrived, and the "hosiery" would arrive, or would not arrive to-morrow, according as Norah Culpepper was able or unable to keep the appointment he had suggested to her. As evening approached, and no answer came from Paramé, Mr. Culpepper grew seriously alarmed. He began to fear that either his messenger had never reached his destination, or something was wrong at Paramé itself. He debated seriously in his own mind what he ought to do, and finally he determined to go to Paramé himself early the next morning, and to take his risk of being followed there by the police. He rather thought he had given them the slip by coming out of his office through the adjoining building. At any rate, he had seen no sign since that he was being followed. It was disquieting that no reply had come from Paramé; but, even if something had gone wrong, he would be certainly no worse off in France than in England, and it might be that no one would pursue him thither. Shortly after Wilson had rung up the Hendon Aerodrome, Mr. Culpepper did the same and tried to ar-

range for a passage for an early hour the next morning. An aeroplane, he found, would be leaving early, with room for an additional passenger, but it would depend on the original hirer's consenting whether he could travel in it or not. Culpepper, who had given the name of Morgan and described himself as a merchant having urgent business in St. Malo, tried hard to reserve an assured passage, but finally he made the best of a bad job, and agreed to turn up on the following morning and take his chance of the other passenger's consent. The aerodrome would not give the name of this passenger, so that Culpepper was unable to get into touch with him overnight.

Wilson, driving up to Hendon early the next morning with the boy in buttons, was taken into the office and asked if he would mind if a Mr. Morgan, a merchant anxious to get to St. Malo in a hurry, shared the aeroplane with him. He agreed, and was taken to be introduced to Mr. Morgan. The little man started back when he saw Wilson, and seemed to expect immediate arrest. Wilson laughed at his discomfiture. "Hallo, Culpepper," he said, "are you coming too? The more the merrier."

"Coming where?" said Culpepper. "I'm going home, if that's what you mean."

"We shall be companions," said Wilson. "An unexpected pleasure, my dear sir. And we shall both meet friends we know on the other side."

Culpepper shrugged his shoulders. He turned to the clerk in charge. "My name," he said, "is not Morgan. It is Culpepper. I shall share Superintendent Wilson's aeroplane."

Wilson laughed again. "The play would not be complete without you," he said. "Come, hop in."

The three travellers took their seats. The plane ran along the ground, and then soared. The last contingent of our actors had set off for the grand transformation scene which will end our story.

. . . . . .

At Paramé, meanwhile, events had been moving fast. Inspector Blaikie, as the previous day advanced, had become more and more bewildered. He had been sent to France to keep a watch on Norah Culpepper, with orders to arrest her only if she attempted to make her escape. This had seemed plain enough, and he had easily arranged with the French police for a warrant, and for the help of French officers in effecting the arrest, if this became necessary. But Blaikie had not bargained for the complications which set in soon after he had posted his watch. When first Arthur Wharton and then Lord Ealing, each followed by a detective from London, made their appearance at the villa, Blaikie could not make head or tail of these mysterious occurrences. Then Lord Ealing drove away in his hired car inland, and Blaikie had only one car immediately handy, and that he would not let go, lest Norah Culpepper should seize the chance of getting away. There was, therefore, some delay before the man detailed to keep on Lord Ealing's track could follow him. Lord Ealing, for the moment, got clean away, and Blaikie had to send off two of his three English detectives in pursuit, in the hope of picking up the trail.

When Arthur Wharton and Norah Culpepper took their stroll along the beach and then both returned to the villa, the Inspector was somewhat reassured. Apparently, the inmates of the villa suspected nothing, and were pursuing their ordinary course. At all events,

Norah Culpepper did not appear to have any immediate intention of running away. It was all very perplexing, but Blaikie made up his mind to leave the watch to his remaining subordinate, and to snatch a few hours' sleep. If Norah Culpepper was meditating an escape, she would probably wait till it was quite dark, and that would not be till very late on this fine August night.

Blaikie's fellow-detective, left in sole charge—for the French police, though near at hand, had retired at evening to a room where they were drinking and playing cards—ensconced himself in an empty boat from which he could command a good view of the house. It was a beautiful, warm, drowsy night. He did not fall asleep, but his faculties were pleasantly lulled, and he felt most comfortable where he was. He watched the house, but he did not note any of the subdued bustle of the approaching flight.

At half-past ten a boy on a bicycle rode up to the cottage where Blaikie was taking his repose in the best bedroom, and left a telegram for the Inspector. The woman who received it, saying that it was a pity to disturb the gentleman, left it on the mantelpiece in the sitting-room for him to find when he woke and then went herself to bed. Blaikie, waking at eleven o'clock, went out without going into the sitting-room, and found his subordinate half asleep in the empty boat. After rating the man soundly, he stole through the coppice towards the boathouse, and tried to look through the crack in the wall. But it was too dark to make out the interior. Reassured by finding all quiet, Blaikie completed a slow survey of the entire premises, and returned to his cottage to fetch his pipe, which he had left on the sitting-room mantelpiece. As

he entered he at last saw Wilson's telegram, and stretched out his hand to take it.

As he did so, he heard a loud shout from the villa, followed by other shouts, amid which he could hear the snortings of a motor-car about to start. Thrusting the telegram into his pocket, still unopened, he rushed out of doors, and ran quickly towards the villa. He was just in time to see a motor-car with a man driving and a woman muffled up beside him, starting along the road leading straight inland from the Culpepper villa. The French policemen, disturbed at their cards, came running after him towards the villa in a compact little body. The inhabitants of the nearer houses, disturbed by the shouting, either came running out into the road, or threw up their windows, and inquired volubly what the matter was. There was a great scattering to and fro.

"Quick, the car," said Blaikie to his subordinate, beckoning at the same time to the leader of the French police. Followed by these two, he dashed towards the car which he had waiting in readiness and leapt in. In five minutes the three police officers were in full pursuit of the flying car. But the car they were following was a fast one, and Blaikie saw they might be in for a long chase.

"Leave a man or two to watch the house, and the rest of you get another car and come after us," shouted the leader of the French police to his followers, as the police car started on its way. The little group of policemen scattered this way and that.

At that instant came a faint throbbing sound from the Culpepper villa, and the motor-boat, with Norah and Pasquett aboard, shot out of the mouth of the little river, making straight for sea. A policeman

turning, managed to flash his lantern towards it, but in a couple of minutes it was out of sight, and only the throb of its engine could be faintly heard.

"The boat, the boat," shouted the French policemen, dancing up and down on the beach. "Where is our boat? Warn her, warn her." Deprived of their leader, who had gone off with Blaikie in pursuit of the flying motor-car, the policemen seemed to have lost the power of action. But, after a short hesitation, they all ran, shouting and gesticulating, towards the place where the police boat lay.

When they reached it, the alarm had already been given, and the man who had been left in charge was already preparing to start the boat. Two more policemen scrambled in and then the police boat shot out seaward in pursuit.

Arthur Wharton, meanwhile, was left alone in the villa with Mrs. Culpepper, who was in hysterics in the drawing-room. Abandoning his ineffectual efforts to comfort her, Arthur soon left the house and emerged upon the beach. He wanted to see what was happening. The remaining French policeman was battering at the front door a moment after he had come out by the garden.

Arthur stared seaward, but he could see nothing. The sound of the engines had died away. But soon came a noise of shouting over the sea. Arthur could hear no words, but he thought, rightly, that the shouts came from the police boat. Had they caught the fugitives? Or what had happened? Arthur remained, how long he did not know, staring into the darkness, but hearing only an occasional sound, made faint by distance.

At last came a sound behind him. One of the motors

was returning. A car drove up to the point on the road nearest the sea. Blaikie and the two other policemen leapt down. They were cursing savagely. Blaikie saw Arthur's figure on the beach, and came running towards him. "What has happened?" he cried.

"Have you caught them?" asked Arthur, not anxious to give information before he must.

"Caught them?" shouted Blaikie furiously. "Yes, I've caught them. What's happened here? That's what I want to know."

"You had better ask some one who knows," said Arthur. "I came out because I heard a lot of shouting."

Blaikie seized Arthur by the lapels of his coat, and shook him. "Look here," he said, "I'll stand no nonsense. You were in that house. You know. Out with it."

"Go and see for yourself," said Arthur, shaking himself free.

Blaikie cursed again, and ran towards the villa. As he did so, the French policemen threw up a window, and shouted, "Who's there?" The French Inspector, who had now joined Blaikie, answered, and there was a rapid colloquy in excited French. "She has escaped," said the French Inspector, "in the boat—with a man. The police boat is in chase of them."

Blaikie had remembered, while this colloquy was proceeding, the telegram which he had thrust into his pocket just as the alarm was given. Taking it out, he tore it open and read it. His expression changed from anger to consternation. "My God!" he said, "Pasquett."

"What is that?" asked the other English detective.

"Pasquett was in the house," said Blaikie. "This is

a wire—from the Superintendent—ordering me to get the French police to arrest him at once. Hell! It's he who's gone off with the girl in that boat. Quick! We must go after them. Where's that other boat you found?"

The detective answered by example. "This way," he said, beginning to run. Blaikie and the French police officer followed along the shore. Arthur was left alone again. He strained eyes and ears seaward. It seemed to him he could hear still a faint and distant sound, as of voices. Had the police boat caught the fugitives? His heart stood still.

In a few minutes he heard the third boat start, but it, too, speedily vanished seaward. There was not a sound on the shore, though the inhabitants of the little town had gathered in knots by the cottages discussing the strange events of the night. From the Culpepper villa came a blaze of light; for the French policeman had switched on all the lights, and was now turning the house upside down in an exhaustive search for nothing in particular. Arthur did not want to go back to the villa while he was there, but he felt a certain responsibility for seeing that Mrs. Culpepper came to no harm. He just stayed on the beach, and waited for something to happen. There was no sign of the Rustons or their car.

At length the policeman seemed to complete his examination of the villa. One by one the lights went out, till, from where Arthur stood, only the drawing-room light was visible. Then the policeman emerged, talking to some one within the house. Presumably he was giving his orders to Mrs. Culpepper. Arthur avoided him and entered the house by way of the

garden. He found Mrs. Culpepper still in the drawing-room, moaning softly to herself.

Arthur spent the rest of the night between comforting Mrs. Culpepper and making short expeditions in search of news. But there was no news. No boat returned: nothing happened. At any rate, it looked as if Norah and Pasquett had not been caught yet.

Day dawned, and showed nothing but a waste of sea. The three boats were out of sight. At length Marie arrived, buzzing with excitement and news. The first police boat, she said, had stuck on a sandbank, and the second had lost time in helping her off. The fugitives, meanwhile, had got clean away. After expressing at great length her unfavourable views of the police, Marie at length set about preparing breakfast and repairing some of the havoc that they had wrought. Arthur left the house, and went in search of the Rustons, whose address he had obtained from Mrs. Culpepper. But the Rustons, it appeared, were in bed, sleeping off the effects of their exciting night. Arthur thought it best not to disturb them. He walked on to the police station, but there they could, or would, tell him nothing. He went back to the villa for a mournful breakfast with Mrs. Culpepper, and then hung about the shore, still waiting on events.

At length he saw a car approaching. As it drew near he recognised two of the occupants. One was Superintendent Wilson and the other Alfred Culpepper. With them were a French police officer and a small boy in a state of great excitement.

CHAPTER XXXIII

IN WHICH SUPERINTENDENT WILSON GIVES SOME INFORMATION, AND ASKS FOR SOME MORE

Wilson saw Arthur and stopped the car. "Well, Mr. Wharton," he said, "I understand the birds have flown."

"Have they escaped?" asked Arthur eagerly.

"The police boats have put back to St. Malo, if that's what you mean, and they haven't caught them. Of course, there are bigger boats on the job now. But that's after the fair. Upon my word, I never saw an affair so bungled. Very nicely managed, on your side, Mr. Wharton. I suppose I may call it your side."

"If you like," said Arthur. "Then they have got clean away?"

"So far, so far. But, unless they have a ship waiting to pick them up, they're bound to be caught soon." Wilson looked keenly at Arthur as he said this. He wanted to find out. Apparently he drew his conclusions. "Ah, I see there is a ship," he went on. "Then they have a chance. Upon my word, Mr. Pasquett would have made a fine detective. A pity, Mr. Wharton. A pity. He should have kept straight."

"Look here, Superintendent," said Arthur, "I want you to know the truth about Jack Pasquett. He told me all about it yesterday—I mean what happened at Sugden's Hotel. It can't hurt him for you to know. You think horrible things about him, and they aren't true."

"But suppose I know already, Mr. Wharton?"

"But you can't know. You practically told me you could prove Jack Pasquett was the man who killed Radlett at Sugden's Hotel."

"True. But I have learnt a number of things since then, and put two and two together. I should have seen the truth long ago."

"Then you do know now——"

"I know," said Wilson slowly, "that John Pasquett no more killed Hugh Radlett at Sugden's Hotel than you or I did."

"And you know——"

"I know that Culpepper told us a pack of lies. Didn't you, Culpepper?" Wilson went on, as that worthy, having hovered in the background for a few minutes, approached.

Culpepper gave a wan smile. "I was thinking of going into the house to look for my poor wife," he said, "but the policeman won't let me go in."

Wilson shouted a few words in French to the French officer, and Culpepper trotted off and disappeared into the house. As he did so, another motor-car drove up, and Blaikie descended from it. He came up to Wilson sheepishly. "No word of them yet, sir," he said. "I'm very much afraid they've got away."

"You've sent out the wireless messages?" asked Wilson.

"Yes, sir."

"And communicated with the Admiral at Portsmouth?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then, I think, that's all we can do at present. Upon my word, Blaikie, you have made a mess of it."

"I'm sorry, sir. I was——"

"Never mind, Blaikie. Can't be helped. Suppose we all go into the house. I want to have a little consultation. By the way, where's Lord Ealing? Our party is hardly complete without him, even if we overlook the absence of the principal actors."

"We've found him, sir. He drove into the town this morning, looking for a Mr. Ruston, who was mixed up in this affair last night. I told him to come along here to see you."

"Let us go in, then," said Wilson, leading the way into the dining-room whither Blaikie, Arthur Wharton, the boy, and the French detective followed. Wilson went across to the drawing-room and summoned Mr. and Mrs. Culpepper to come. The whole party gathered round the table expectantly. Wilson took a seat at the head of the table. "We will give Lord Ealing five minutes," he said, taking out his watch. They waited in silence.

Before the five minutes were up, a car was heard in the distance, and Lord Ealing stepped out of it, and came into the room. He looked weary after his night's adventures, and a little ill at ease. But the haunting fear of yesterday had been put away. "You sent for me," he said to the Superintendent.

Wilson pointed to a vacant chair. "I wanted you, my lord, to make our little party complete, apart from the unfortunate absence of Mr. Pasquett and Miss Culpepper." He smiled a satirical smile at Blaikie as he spoke. "Now we can get to business. Have you seen Mr. Ruston, my lord?"

"Eh, what's that?" said Lord Ealing. "Yes, I have just left Mr. Ruston, since you wish to know. Though I fail to see what concern it is of yours."

"We shall see, my lord," said Wilson. "Will you sit down?"

"I am going to tell you all," said Wilson, "as nearly as I know it, what really happened at Sugden's Hotel on a certain night which was the starting-point of this case. Mr. Culpepper, I believe, knows the truth, and so does Mr. Wharton. If I am wrong at any point, they can correct me. But before I come to the details, I will make my attitude on one point plain, in the hope that it may induce you all to be frank with me. John Pasquett committed no murder at Sugden's Hotel." Wilson looked round the table to measure the effect of his words.

Blaikie gave a sigh of relief. "Then I haven't let the murderer escape," he said. "But who did kill him, if Pasquett didn't? Surely not Rosenbaum, after all?"

"All in good time," said Wilson. "Let us take it that Pasquett did not. Will that help you to tell me the truth? Eh, Mr. Culpepper?"

"I didn't speak," said the little man. "I'm listening."

"Very well, then. Now, before I begin about what happened at Sugden's Hotel, I want to ask you all a question. You, Lord Ealing, gave me to understand yesterday, through a misunderstanding, that the man who calls himself John Pasquett is not really John Pasquett at all. Why did you think that?"

Lord Ealing said nothing for a moment. Then he answered, "You'd better ask my nephew."

"Are you more willing than you were yesterday to explain, Mr. Wharton?" asked Wilson.

"The whole thing," said Arthur, "was an absurd

misunderstanding. Pasquett proved to me yesterday that he is John Pasquett—proved it absolutely."

"But what made you think that he was not?"

"I found in Siberia what seemed to be proofs of his death some years ago. But it was not Pasquett who died then."

"Who was it, Mr. Wharton?"

"It was Hugh Radlett."

"What's that you say?" asked Lord Ealing.

"What the devil do you mean?" asked Blaikie.

Wilson smiled a slow smile of intense satisfaction. "Hugh Radlett," he repeated. "That makes it all clear."

"But," said Lord Ealing, "that can't be. I met Radlett in London the day before the crime. He was alive enough then."

"How did you know it was Radlett, my lord?"

"Good God! Do you mean that Radlett was an impostor?"

"That is precisely what I mean. Hugh Radlett, as you have just heard, was dead long before. What made you think it was Pasquett who died, Mr. Wharton?"

"He was buried under Pasquett's name."

"Why? How did that happen?"

It was Arthur's turn to smile. "You get on with your story, Superintendent," he said, "and, in due course, I'll come to mine. You may assume that John Pasquett is John Pasquett, and no one else, and that, whatever happened at Sugden's Hotel, it was not Hugh Radlett who was murdered there."

"Then who was it?" asked Lord Ealing.

"No one at all," said Wilson. "There was no one murdered at Sugden's Hotel."

"No one," said Lord Ealing, incredulously. "What on earth do you mean?"

"But the body?" said Blaikie.

"Will you produce the body, Inspector?" asked Wilson.

"Rosenbaum took it away in the trunk."

"There never was a body in the trunk."

"But—Culpepper here saw it. He put it in himself," said Lord Ealing.

"Did you, Mr. Culpepper?" asked Wilson. "Did you put a body in the trunk?"

"I—I—I—I couldn't help it," said the little man.

Lord Ealing turned fiercely on Culpepper. "Do you mean to tell me," he said, "that you never put any body in that trunk at all? Is this a practical joke, Wilson?"

"You see, Lord Ealing," said Wilson gaily, "Mr. Culpepper was in the plot."

"In the plot? What plot?"

"The little plot for the success of which it was essential that Radlett should do two things."

"What things?"

"First, come to life, and then, die."

"Come to life? What for?" asked Blaikie.

"To make his will, Inspector."

"And die?" asked Arthur, entering into the spirit of the colloquy.

"To make room for his heir under the will, Mr. Wharton. Am I right?"

"You seem to know it all, Superintendent," said Arthur.

"And his heir——" Lord Ealing began.

"Was John Pasquett," said Wilson.

"But," said Lord Ealing, "if it wasn't Radlett I saw

in London, when we fixed up all about the concession, who the devil was it?"

"I can't tell you for certain, Lord Ealing, but I think I know the answer. I'll hazard a guess. Mr. Culpepper perhaps will tell me if I am wrong. It was —John Pasquett."

"Pasquett? Impossible! It was a quite different man."

"Externally, no doubt. You expected a different man, and you thought it was a different man. But was it only one very good actor playing two parts? Eh, Mr. Culpepper?"

"Nonsense," said Mr. Culpepper.

"That is my conclusion," said Wilson, "and I think Mr. Culpepper will soon realise he had better tell us the truth."

"I have told you the truth," said Culpepper. "It was that villain Rosenbaum did it."

"But if Pasquett was Radlett, how did he get away from the hotel without being seen?" It was Blaikie this time who asked this question.

"He went away quite openly; only on this occasion it was as Rosenbaum that he went."

"Do you mean to tell me Pasquett was Rosenbaum, too?" asked Lord Ealing, incredulously. "This is really too much."

"Nevertheless," said Wilson, "I do tell you that Pasquett and Rosenbaum were the same person, just as Pasquett and Radlett were one and the same."

"But, sir, there were two men at the hotel—Radlett and Rosenbaum. Who was the other man?" asked Blaikie.

"There was no other man," said Wilson.

"But they were both seen."

"My dear Blaikie, there is the vital point you and I

both missed. Two apparently different men were seen, but they were never seen together. I have been carefully over the notes of the case. Radlett and Rosenbaum were never seen together."

"Yes, sir, they were. On the boat," said Blaikie. "Coming over from Ostend."

"True, O Inspector," said Wilson. "But need I remind you that it was the real Rosenbaum who was on the boat coming over? The real Rosenbaum never came to Sugden's Hotel. The two men were never seen together at the hotel."

"You're right, sir," said Blaikie. "But who'd 'a' thought it?"

"You and I ought to have thought it, but we didn't. I didn't, till it came to me when I read over the notes —after I had made up my mind the supposed murder was a deliberate plant and no murder at all."

"How did you find that out?" asked Arthur.

"It came to me in a flash," said Wilson. "It suddenly occured to me that the whole evidence for the murder came from a tainted source. I mean you, Mr. Culpepper."

Culpepper bit his lip, but he made no reply.

"I still don't see how you could prove anything," said Arthur.

"If Culpepper was lying," said Wilson, "there remained not a shred of evidence that there had ever been a body."

"But the trunk?"

"Oh, yes. There was the trunk, of course, and it was heavy enough to contain a body. But did it? And, if not, what did it contain?"

Mr. Culpepper spoke at last. "Well, what did it?" he asked.

"You say you packed it," said Wilson. "You ought

to know. When I found it, it contained nothing—or next to nothing. You remember the puzzle was how 'Rosenbaum,' having taken it to that house in Grosvenor Place with a body in it, had managed to leave it behind empty, and got away unobserved with the contents."

"How did he?"

"He didn't. I found the contents last night—at Grosvenor Place."

"But surely," said Lord Ealing, "your men made a thorough search long ago."

"They did," said Wilson, "but they were looking for the wrong thing. I was looking for the right thing last night. And I found it."

"What was it?" asked Arthur.

"What was the heaviest thing we found in Radlett's luggage?" said Wilson.

"I follow you," said Lord Ealing. "Lumps of rock."

"Quite so. Lumps of rock. I found them at Grosvenor Place. The so-called Rosenbaum had found an excellent place of concealment for them."

"Where?"

"Why, on the rockery in the garden. What better place could there be? There they were when I went to look. All the police had stared at them, and no one had ever noticed them."

"Upon my word," said Lord Ealing, "that was clever. The man who could think of that had his head screwed on the right way."

"Or very cleverly screwed on the wrong way, my lord. Well, that was how I found out what was in the trunk. At least I noticed, when I examined the trunk again yesterday, that there was rock grit at the bottom. That put me on the track."

"Smart work," said the boy in buttons, speaking for the first time.

"I appreciate the compliment," said Wilson, laughing. "That boy also came in very handy, by the way."

"What is he doing here?" asked Lord Ealing, looking at him superciliously.

"You remind me of my failure," said Wilson. "I brought him here to identify Pasquett. You see, he noticed things. He saw that the man who called himself Rosenbaum had a crumpled ear."

"A crumpled ear?"

"Yes, and Pasquett had a crumpled ear, too. I knew already that Pasquett had been in London on the night of the crime, and that he had escaped from England in a hurry on the following day. With the aid of your fair daughter, Mr. Culpepper."

"That's nothing to do with me," growled Culpepper. "I know nothing about it."

"That is as may be. At any rate, you had another part to play. Well, as soon as I knew that the Rosenbaum of the hotel had a crumpled ear, whereas the real Rosenbaum has not, I knew that Rosenbaum was Pasquett. But the boy has helped me more than that. He put into my head the idea that Pasquett was Radlett as well. He only told me this morning on the way over. He didn't realise it was important. But he noticed that Radlett and Rosenbaum were both left-handed. Now, Pasquett is left-handed. If it weren't for this boy noticing things, where should we all have been?"

"Teacher used to say I noticed things," said the boy, proudly.

"Go on noticing, my lad," said Wilson, "and you'll be a great man yet. If other people had noticed those

ears, we might have hung John Pasquett long ago. ("For a crime he didn't commit," interjected Arthur.) At all events, Mr. Wharton, we should have had him safe under lock and key, instead of——"

"What, I wonder?" said Arthur.

"Safe on the high seas, probably," said Wilson. "But that's not part of my story. When I had found those bits of rock, I went straight back to Scotland Yard, and read right through all the papers bearing on the case. Among others, Radlett's story of his life. You remember it?"

"A very moving document," said Lord Ealing. "I remember it well."

"A most curious document," said Wilson. "You remember there was a complete typewritten copy, and a manuscript copy in Radlett's writing, from which several sheets were missing. I found that the manuscript stopped short. . . . Where do you think it stopped, Mr. Wharton?"

"I don't know. Certainly it couldn't go beyond the time of Radlett's escape from prison."

"It didn't. It stopped after Pasquett's, but before Radlett's escape from prison. But the typewritten copy went on. It brought in all the stuff about Radlett's escape and his later negotiations with the Soviet Government, and so on. In short, the manuscript was genuine, but the typescript was a forgery."

"You guessed that?" said Arthur.

"I guessed it was a forgery. I did not, I confess, find the explanation. I don't altogether know it now. But I guessed that Pasquett's impersonation of Radlett must date some time back beyond the business at Sugden's. Am I right there?"

Arthur nodded.

"That's good," said Wilson. "I was right again. Perhaps Mr. Wharton, or Mr. Culpepper, can tell us more. But there's one thing I confess I don't understand. I am going to ask Lord Ealing a question. Why, my lord, were you so anxious that we should not find Rosenbaum?"

"I . . . anxious, Wilson? Not in the least. What *do* you mean?"

"And why did you send Mr. Wharton to Warsaw in search of Pasquett?"

Lord Ealing visibly hesitated, and looked at Arthur, as if he suspected him of giving the secret away. "I naturally wanted to get into touch with him," he said at last.

"But why did you deny knowing where Pasquett was?"

"I did not know. I only . . . thought he might be at Warsaw."

"What made you think that?"

"Really, Wilson, what is the point of the catechism? If I thought he was at Warsaw, I clearly didn't know he was in London. I don't see what my private affairs have to do with the case."

"Perhaps nothing, my lord. That is just what I was trying to make sure of."

"I hope you will take my assurance that they have nothing to do with it."

"One more question, Lord Ealing. Why did you, behind Inspector Blaikie's back, rifle Radlett's papers at the hotel? I may as well tell you that you left your finger marks all over them."

Lord Ealing, manifestly discomfited by this home thrust, was about to speak, when Culpepper suddenly laughed—a low, sniggering laugh. Wilson and Lord

Ealing both turned towards him. Lord Ealing had gone red, as if the laugh frightened him.

"Have you any information bearing on this point, Mr. Culpepper?" asked Wilson.

"Before I open my lips," said Culpepper, "I want to know where I stand. Am I charged, am I to be charged with anything?" Culpepper looked keenly at Wilson as he spoke. "You see," he added, "I don't quite see what you can charge me with."

"You are a partner in this murder—I mean, this—fraud," said Blaikie. "You have given false evidence."

"Pardon, Inspector. I have given no evidence at all. I have told you a little story of what happened at Sugden's Hotel, and to that story I adhere. Apparently, you disbelieve me, and Superintendent Wilson has invented some extraordinary tale about there being no body in the trunk. That story is not true. It may be quite true that it was Pasquett who committed the murder, though, if that is so, I was as much deceived by him as every one else. It may not have been Hugh Radlett who was murdered. But I tell you positively, and I will tell you under oath, if I am brought to trial, that there was a murder, and there was a body in the trunk, whatever else there may have been as well. Gentlemen, I saw the murderer with his victim in his arms." Culpepper looked round the table, meeting in turn the eyes of every man present. "And, as for Lord Ealing, I have something to say. Mr. Radlett showed me, on the night before his murder, a most interesting letter from Lord Ealing, of which I am fortunate enough to possess a copy. If I am brought to trial, I shall have that letter read in court."

"It's an infamous lie," said Lord Ealing. "You have

not got the letter—there is no letter for you to have."

"Which do you mean, Lord Ealing? Is there a letter, which Mr. Culpepper has not got? Or is there no letter?"

"I tell you there is no letter," said Lord Ealing. "It's all a plot. I have been tricked."

"If there is no letter," said Wilson, "why get excited about something that does not exist? And who, pray, has tricked you?"

"I beg your pardon, Wilson. I was angry. It seemed that an infamous charge was being made against me. If there is no charge——"

"An infamous charge, Lord Ealing? I have heard no charge. I did not hear Mr. Culpepper even hint at what was in the letter."

"If there is no charge," Lord Ealing continued, "why, let us say no more about it."

Arthur meanwhile had been trying to signal privately to Culpepper, who knew nothing of the bargain between Pasquett and Lord Ealing, to shut up. He felt that Lord Ealing was indeed being unfairly used.

"And why, Mr. Wharton, are you so anxious that Mr. Culpepper should hold his tongue?" said Wilson, who had noticed Arthur's gesture. Arthur's jaw dropped, but he had nothing to say.

"Now, Mr. Culpepper," Wilson continued, "will you please tell us all about this letter of Lord Ealing's?"

Culpepper was obviously perplexed. He could not make out why Arthur wanted him to be quiet. "No," he said, "I prefer to say nothing at present. Of course, if a charge is made against me, I may have to—is there a charge against me?"

"On that point, I can give you no answer, at present. It all depends. I should advise you, in your own interest, to be perfectly frank with me." Culpepper shook his head, and Wilson turned again to Lord Ealing. "Now, my lord, have you any further statement to make?"

"Only that if any further lying accusations are made against me, I shall know how to proceed."

"You seem to know all about this, Mr. Wharton. Have you anything to say about this letter?" asked Wilson.

"No," said Arthur shortly.

"I confess," said Wilson, "that I am disappointed. I had hoped that, when I told you all the true circumstances of the crime, you would be frank with me, and between us we should clear up the little elements of mystery that remain. I have been open with you, but you have not been frank—not one of you. I shall have to report fully on the case to the Home Secretary, and ask for his instructions. Meanwhile, gentlemen, permit me in a few words to sum up the case as I see it. It is clear, I believe, despite what Mr. Culpepper is pleased to say, that there was no murder at Sugden's Hotel. That affair was a case, directly, not of murder, but of fraud and forgery with a view to the acquisition of Hugh Radlett's wealth. Mr. Culpepper was a party to the crime, and you, my lord, while you were not a party to it, and were as much in the dark as to its main features as I was, yet had some connection with these events which has not yet been made clear. The supposed murder, then, was a 'plant' intended to deceive the police. Radlett was brought to life in order that he might make his will and appear to

die. But, gentlemen, Radlett did actually die, at some previous time, and, in some way or other, the circumstances of his death so closely involved John Pasquett that he was apparently buried under Pasquett's name. The details of these circumstances, I need hardly tell you, will have to be most carefully investigated; for they give rise to a natural suspicion that Pasquett, though he did not murder Radlett at Sugden's Hotel, may have murdered him in Siberia. If that is so—and, mind you, I am not saying that it is or that it is not—those of you who were accomplices in the fraud may—I say, may—have been also accomplices in the murder, if murder was done at an earlier date. I want you, Culpepper, especially to realise the gravity of the suspicion under which you lie. I shall now give any person here present an opportunity of making any further statement he may wish to make. If none of you has anything to say, I shall bring this conference to an end." Wilson paused for a moment only, and then rose from his chair at the head of the table.

The little group round the table rose, too, and stared blankly at one another. Then Arthur Wharton found his tongue. "I can't," he said, "possibly leave it like that. You're totally wrong, Superintendent. I have a statement to make. I claim the right to speak.

"I told you before you began, that I was willing to tell you all about it. It is monstrous, when you have just proved that John Pasquett did not commit the murder at the hotel, to charge him, without a shadow of evidence, of having committed it somewhere else. I protest. Do you wish to know the truth, or do you not?"

"All the truth, Mr. Wharton?" asked Wilson.

"Yes, all the truth."

"Including that little bit about Lord Ealing's letter?"

"That has nothing to do with it," said Arthur.

"I protest," said Lord Ealing, "at your dragging my private affairs into this case."

"Perhaps Mr. Wharton will kindly proceed," said Wilson, with a twinkle in his eye. "Go ahead, Mr. Wharton. And suppose we all sit down again."

CHAPTER XXXIV

IN WHICH THE MISSING LINKS ARE SUPPLIED, AND ARTHUR WHARTON RECEIVES A HINT

"As you know," said Arthur, addressing himself to Wilson, "I had the whole story direct from Jack Pasquett last night. Most of it you have found out for yourself. Though how you did it, I don't profess to know. Anyhow, as you know half the story, it is best you should know the whole thing. I should have told you in any case. I want to put out of your mind at once that horrible idea that Jack Pasquett ever killed Radlett, at Sugden's Hotel or anywhere else.

"Let me explain to you how that absurd muddle, in which my uncle and I were both mixed up, about John Pasquett's identity arose. Yes, it was an absurd muddle, uncle; John Pasquett is John Pasquett, and no one else.

"It happened like this. He and I went together to Siberia, as you know. Out there—never mind the details now—I stumbled on what seemed to be absolute proof that Pasquett had died down in Turkestan a couple of years ago. I met the actual man who had signed the death certificate. Then I got him and Pasquett together, though Jack did not want to meet him, and he at once addressed Pasquett as 'Mr. Radlett.' I was very much worried, but I hadn't an idea of the real truth. Then, purely by chance, Pasquett encountered an old acquaintance of his while he was

with me, and the fellow addressed him, not as Pasquett, but as 'Jack Pearson.' I tried to get Jack to give me a coherent explanation of what it all meant, but naturally he wouldn't tell me the truth then, and his explanations only made matters worse. I told him frankly—we were very close friends, you know—that I didn't know who he was, or whether he was really entitled to Radlett's property, and that I should have to go back to England and lay all the facts before Lord Ealing. Jack finally said he would come back with me, as he could easily prove, once he got back to Europe, that he was John Pasquett, and that my suspicions were all nonsense. That was how we came to return together unexpectedly to Europe."

"I see. Go on, Mr. Wharton."

"We came to Paris first, because Jack wanted to find some friends and some old papers and photographs which would establish his identity. We went to the Culpeppers' flat, but they were away at Paramé, and Jack's friends—Mr. and Mrs. Ruston—were also absent from Paris, and we couldn't find out where they were. Jack said he would go to Paramé and find the Culpeppers, who would know where the Rustons were; as it turned out, of course, they were actually here. I said I would go straight to London, and see Lord Ealing, and Jack could follow with the proofs." Arthur paused and then continued in a lower voice.

"I want to be quite frank with you, Superintendent. The reason why I left Jack and went on to London was to give him a chance of getting away safely, in case he really wasn't—who he said he was."

"I understand," said Wilson.

"I came on to London, and saw my uncle."

"I don't quite know, Mr. Wharton, why you saw

him, and gave him to understand that Mr. Pasquett was—not Mr. Pasquett, if you still weren't sure yourself. Why didn't you wait till Pasquett's identity was either proved, or disproved, by his running away?"

"I never did tell my uncle that Jack was not Pasquett. I only said I very much feared he was not. And, you see, I had written him an account of my doubts from Siberia, when the thing first happened."

"I see. So Lord Ealing knew, as much as you knew, some time before your arrival. You kept your knowledge to yourself, my lord?"

"It would have been unjust to Mr. Pasquett," said Lord Ealing, "to act on a mere suspicion. I told no one."

"You seemed to think it more than a suspicion when I met you yesterday."

"My dear Wilson, it was a complete misunderstanding. I thought you had come to tell me that Pasquett was proved an impostor."

"I see," said Wilson dryly. "Now, Mr. Wharton, you came back and you saw Lord Ealing. What occurred between you?"

"Only say what is relevant to the case, Arthur," said Lord Ealing.

"My uncle," said Arthur, "jumped to the conclusion that Pasquett was an impostor, and made me believe it too."

"Then why, Mr. Wharton, did you refuse to tell me this yesterday? And why did Lord Ealing refuse?"

"We agreed to hush it up," said Arthur.

"Superintendent, let me make this clear," said Lord Ealing. "We only agreed to say nothing until the truth was definitely established. Of course, once I was

sure, I should, as a man of honour, have taken action at once."

"That is not true," said Arthur. "Lord Ealing persuaded me, through my friendship with Jack, to hush the whole thing up, even if it was true. That was why I wouldn't tell you, but that reason no longer——"

"The fellow is lying," said Lord Ealing, hotly. "This is all part of a plot against me."

"Let Mr. Wharton finish what he has to say," said Wilson.

"I protest," said Lord Ealing.

"After seeing you yesterday," Arthur continued, "I came straight on here, and found Jack Pasquett. I had wired to him to await my arrival. In five minutes he convinced me of his identity. He showed me photographs of himself, from a child—old papers. And both Mr. and Mrs. Ruston, who were here then, had known him from a boy up. He removed all doubts from my mind. The photographs are in the house now, and the Rustons will at any time swear to his identity. Mr. Ruston is a Canadian merchant, in Paris."

"I think," said Wilson, "we may take Pasquett's identity as provisionally established, subject to confirmation. How, then, did the mistake arise?"

"I was coming to that," said Arthur. "You remember Pasquett and Radlett were in prison together, in Turkestan. Then Jack escaped, while Radlett was recaptured in helping him to get away. Jack wouldn't leave his friend behind. He came back, and finally helped him to escape as well. They got away into the mountains, hoping to make their way into India. It was intensely cold, Jack says, and Radlett had some disease on him. He became too ill and weak to go on.

They had to halt and make a camp. Jack nursed him as best he could, but up there in the Pamir hills Hugh Radlett died. Jack told me exactly how it happened. He was sitting with Radlett's head on his knees. Radlett was almost past speech. Suddenly he roused himself and said, 'I'm going, Jack. Give me something to write with. I must make my will. Then I'll die in peace.' Jack says he tried to soothe him, but Radlett said, 'I want you to have my money, Jack. Give me a pencil and a scrap of paper,' and he began to write. But he never finished. Look here. Here's what he wrote. Jack gave it me yesterday to show you."

Arthur took a scrap of paper from his pocket-book, and passed it to Wilson, who read it to himself, and then repeated it aloud.

"To my friend and partner, John Pasquett, I leave al——"

"It stops there," said Wilson.

"When he had written that much," said Arthur, "the pencil dropped from his hand, and he gave a sigh, and died.

"Jack Pasquett gave me that paper yesterday. He said it excused what he had done. Let me try to tell you what he felt. 'I have done Hugh Radlett no wrong,' he said. 'Hugh meant and wanted me to have his money. He had often told me so. And I wanted the money, too, half for its sake, half for his.' Jack said he wasn't fond of money—it always flowed through his fingers. But he wanted Radlett's money, because he wanted to carry on the plans they had made together. Oh, I know he broke the law, and I know he was wrong. He has got a twisted way of looking at these things. I suppose he ought just to have accepted his bad luck, and let the money go.

But he's not built that way, and he made me see he had a case—a strong case it sounded, as he told me. I'm not quite justifying him; but I can see his point of view. Can't you?"

"Tell us positively what he did," said Wilson.

"He started at once, beside his friend's body, planning how to get the money. And, up there in the hills, he made his first plan. Why shouldn't he bury his dead friend as John Pasquett, and live himself for the rest of his life as Hugh Radlett, the millionaire? They were of a size, they were like each other, and Jack says he was a good amateur actor in his day. He felt he could play the part. What is more, he could write so like Radlett that only an expert could tell the difference. He had often written letters for Radlett while they were together.

"That was Jack's plan, and he began working it at once. He sent, in Hugh Radlett's name, a letter to the prison authorities, saying that he, John Pasquett, had died up in the mountains, and telling them where to find the body. They found it, and buried it in his name. Then he set to work to get hold of Radlett's papers, which had been left behind in their escape. He wrote in Radlett's name, offering money for them, and got no answer. Then luck favoured him. He met the commissar fellow who had been at the prison. He met him down in India, where he was—incog., of course—doing some secret propaganda work. He promised, if he would get him his papers—he pretended to be Radlett, of course—not to give him away to the Indian authorities. He got the papers and started for Europe as Hugh Radlett, American citizen. He had written before that to Radlett's lawyers in New York, and

got letters and remittances from them which showed that they had no suspicion anything was wrong. Then he went to Moscow as Radlett, and started his negotiations with the Russian Government. That was when he got the concession. He travelled over a good part of Europe as Hugh Radlett. Everything seemed to be going right. And then—he met Culpepper." Arthur turned towards the little man as he spoke.

"I had nothing to do with this imposture," said Culpepper.

"We shall see," said Wilson. "Go on, Mr. Wharton."

"Culpepper had known both Radlett and Pasquett in Siberia. Jack was staying in a hotel in Paris, as Hugh Radlett, of course. He was in the lobby, when Culpepper came in. He saw Culpepper staring at him. Then he says Culpepper went up to the office and asked the girl there a question. After that, he came straight across the room to Jack. 'How do you do, Jack Pasquett?' he said. 'I see Radlett is here with you. I heard you were dead.'

"Bit by bit, he says, Culpepper got the whole story out of him. He had to tell him in order to shut his mouth. Culpepper at once began to blackmail him, and made his life hell."

"I deny this altogether. It is a monstrous invention," said Culpepper.

"I am saying what Pasquett told me," Arthur continued. "He says Culpepper persuaded him that he was playing far too dangerous a game. He was bound to be recognised by others, and his imposture found out. But Culpepper was not a man to let the chance of fortune go. He thought out the scheme which Jack

and he put into execution at Sugden's Hotel. Of course, Culpepper was to have a big slice of Radlett's money in return for his help."

"I suppose," said Culpepper, "I must hear this nonsense out, but please take note that I deny every word of it."

"Quite," said Wilson.

"Culpepper's idea was," said Arthur, "that, as Radlett had never finished his will in Pasquett's favour and there was no chance of establishing it legally, the false Radlett must stay alive long enough to get the concession duly signed, and to make a new will in Pasquett's favour. At first, he wanted the will to be in his favour as well as Jack's, but Jack made him see that it would spoil the value of his evidence, which was essential to their plan. Radlett was to make a new will, and then conveniently die, leaving his money to Jack. But it would be necessary to produce proof of the death, and to get the will properly signed by independent witnesses.

"First of all, Jack went again to Moscow, as Hugh Radlett, and got the concession through in the joint names of Radlett and himself. Then, still as Radlett, he opened up negotiations with my uncle and the Anglo-Asiatic, living at Reval while he was doing this, and taking care to produce the illusion that both Radlett and he had been there. He resumed his own name and identity, only posing occasionally as Radlett in order to keep up the illusion.

"Then came the last act of the play. Pasquett travelled to London as Hugh Radlett, Culpepper coming over separately on another boat. In Moscow, Pasquett had met Rosenbaum; he was an agitator for the Third International, and Jack promised to smuggle

him into England as his secretary. Rosenbaum, of course, thought he was Radlett, and knew nothing of the plot. Jack and Rosenbaum travelled to England together, and parted as soon as they had safely passed the customs authorities. Then Jack went on to Sugden's Hotel, where, as you guessed, he played the double part of Radlett and Rosenbaum, and staged the scene for the supposed murder. In the course of the day, Jack saw Lord Ealing and Mr. Franklin and signed afresh, in the presence of witnesses, the faked will which he and Culpepper had prepared. In the evening Culpepper called at the hotel to see Radlett, by arrangement, of course. He took part in fixing up the rooms so as to produce the illusion of a fatal struggle. They supplied the blood, by the way, by making their noses bleed over the sheets and on the floor. Then Culpepper was left behind as a witness, to prove there had been a body, while Jack went off with the trunk, disguised as Rosenbaum. He played various tricks to throw the police off the scent, escaped out of England into France——"

"How?" asked Wilson.

"I think you know that already," said Arthur. "Miss Culpepper was waiting for him. She met him at Sloane Square, and motored him down from London to Poole, where the boat was waiting to take him across. Jack came here, and the next morning went off by aeroplane to Warsaw, meaning every one to believe he had been there at the time of the murder, and only to fall back on his *alibi* at Paramé if the Warsaw *alibi* fell through. The whole thing went off according to plan, and Jack said he thought the police had given it up as a bad job. Otherwise, of course, he would not have come back to Europe."

"The best laid schemes, Mr. Wharton. Truth will out, even in despite of bungling policemen like Blaikie and me."

"But you found it out," said Arthur.

"Too late, Mr. Wharton, too late. The birds are flown. At least, they have left only you and Mr. Culpepper in the nest. You realise, I suppose, that you have been compounding a felony by helping Pasquett to escape."

"Yes," said Arthur. "I know. I am here if you want me."

"Perhaps, before we come to anything so unpleasant, you will help to clear up one little perplexity that remains in my mind. You did not tell me about Lord Ealing's letter."

"Once more, I protest," said Lord Ealing. "That is quite another matter."

"On that point," said Arthur, "I have nothing to say."

Wilson turned to Culpepper. "You have heard Mr. Wharton's story," he said, "and I think it bears the obvious stamp of truth. What have you to say about it?"

"Nothing," said Culpepper.

"*Le roi s'avisera,*" said Arthur, smiling.

"Nothing?" said Wilson. "Not even about Lord Ealing's letter?"

"Very well," said Culpepper. "If you want to know, you shall know. I won't stop," he added, as Arthur tried to check him. "John Pasquett had in his possession a letter from Lord Ealing in which he promised to use his influence with the Foreign Secretary, in return for a consideration, to secure Government support for the Anglo-Asiatic's dealings with the Soviet

Government. He asked for a large block of unpaid shares in the concession in return for this service. He said he had fixed it up with Sir Lewis Llewellyn."

"He had fixed it up with Llewellyn?" asked Wilson, half incredulously.

"With the Foreign Secretary. This letter was addressed to Mr. Radlett at Sugden's Hotel. It will make something of a sensation if it comes out. Eh, my lord?" Culpepper smiled sardonically at Lord Ealing. "And there was more in it than that."

"There is no such letter," said his lordship. "The man is a liar. Will you take the word of a low criminal against mine? You had better be careful, Wilson."

"Where is this letter?" asked Wilson.

"Pasquett had it," said Culpepper, "but I have a copy. If I am put on trial, I shall read it in court."

"Superintendent Wilson," said Lord Ealing, "this is a monstrous lie. No such letter ever existed, of course. This fellow admits he has only a copy—an obvious forgery."

"What do you say, Mr. Wharton?" asked Wilson.

"I have nothing to say," said Arthur.

"Perhaps," said Culpepper, "Pasquett has left the original behind here. Do you know, my dear?" For the first time, he addressed his wife.

Mrs. Culpepper seemed to wake up suddenly out of a dream. "Oh, no," she said, "Jack gave it to Mr. Ruston yesterday, didn't he, Mr. Wharton? Mr. Ruston was to hand it to Lord Ealing if——" She stopped. A scared expression came to her face. "Oh, dear, whatever have I said?" she added.

"If what?" said Wilson.

"Oh, Alfred, had I better tell?" sobbed Mrs. Culpepper.

"Out with it, woman," said her husband.

"Don't tell, Mrs. Culpepper," said Arthur.

"If—L—Lord Ealing g—got the m—message safely through," Mrs. Culpepper wailed.

"What message?" said Wilson.

'The m—m—message to the ship."

"What ship? Where?"

"Shut up, Maria. You've said enough," said Culpepper. "Now do you believe there was a letter?"

"It's a lie—a plot," said Lord Ealing. "There never was a letter."

"Where did you go, my lord, in your car last night when my men lost sight of you?"

"That's my affair," said Lord Ealing. "And permit me to tell you that, if this monstrous story, with its vile insinuations against Sir Lewis Llewellyn and myself, ever sees the light, it will——" A knock at the door caused him to leave his sentence unfinished.

"Mr. Ruston, sir, is in the hall. Do you wish to see him?" said a detective, who had entered as Lord Ealing was speaking.

"Most opportune," said Wilson. "Show him in."

"Ah, Mr. Ruston. Pleased to see you. We were just talking about that letter of Lord Ealing's Pasquett gave you yesterday."

Ruston started back, astonished. "By the way, where is it now?" Wilson went on.

"Lord Ealing burnt it, as soon as I gave it him," said Ruston, too much surprised to say anything but tell the truth.

"I feared so," said Wilson. "And in return for what service, Mr. Ruston, did you give Lord Ealing back his letter?"

Arthur had by this time signalled to Ruston across

the room, and Ruston took his cue. "It was his," he said. "I don't understand what you mean about a service. I just gave it him."

"What was in it?"

"I don't know. I never read it."

"My dear fellow," said Lord Ealing. "These absurd policemen pretend to believe it had something to do with the crime."

"No connection at all," said Ruston. "A mere matter of business."

Lord Ealing rose from his seat. "Superintendent Wilson," he said majestically, "I have sat here and heard myself insulted and vilified. I have done this, because my one desire was to help the ends of justice. But I warn you. You may go too far. I shall now leave you, and return to England, with only a hint to you to let my affairs alone. Your suspicions are too absurd to be taken seriously. You believe the evidence of this pack of scoundrels and conspirators, and you doubt my word. I will overlook it, Wilson, but I warn you not to meddle with my affairs. And I warn you all. Good-morning, gentlemen."

"Good-morning, my Lord," said Wilson. "I shall know where to find you if I want you."

Lord Ealing swept from the room. Wilson rose again from his seat. "Our conversation is over," he said. "A word with you, Mr. Wharton."

Leaving the others behind, Arthur followed the Superintendent into the garden. "I wanted to give you a word of advice, Mr. Wharton. You have compounded a felony. If I were you, I should not be in a hurry to return to England for a while, until things have—well—settled down. Why not go back to Siberia at once?"

"You mean I'm free to go," said Arthur.

"If I were you," said Wilson, "and, of course, this is strictly between ourselves, I should go without asking any questions. And I should take Culpepper with you."

"Do you mean——" Arthur began.

"You take my advice without asking what I mean. Good-bye, Mr. Wharton. Go and talk to Culpepper at once. I see Inspector Blaikie coming to find me." Wilson put out his hand, and shook Arthur's. "In my private capacity," he said, "I'm not sorry your friends escaped. Good-bye." Arthur went back into the house.

Blaikie came up. "You gave me no instructions, sir. Whom am I to arrest? Lord Ealing? Culpepper? Arthur Wharton? There will be all sorts of formalities about getting warrants. We don't want them to get away."

"Don't we, Blaikie?" asked Wilson, smiling. "I have just told Wharton that the best thing he and Culpepper can do is to get off to Siberia at once."

Blaikie gasped. "You're letting them go, sir?"

"Certainly."

"And Lord Ealing?"

"Most certainly of all. Pretty fools we should look, if we charged Lord Ealing with malpractices on the strength of Culpepper's tainted evidence, based on a letter we couldn't produce. Besides, I see you've not heard the news."

"The news?"

"The Government fell unexpectedly last night. Lord Ealing will be in the new Cabinet. It would not surprise me if he returned to the Home Office. It would be a new thing for Scotland Yard to accuse the

Home Secretary of corrupt practices and abetting the escape of a felon. Wouldn't it?"

"Oh, Lord, sir," said Blaikie. "Whatever shall we do?"

"Drop the whole case, Blaikie, like a hot brick. If I had any really good evidence against Lord Ealing, I would go through with it, no matter what it led to. But I haven't. All these folks will lie. Ealing helped Pasquett to escape, and they will all stand by him—even Culpepper, when they have explained the situation to him. No, Blaikie, we've got to take jolly good care *not* to catch Pasquett now. Call off the pursuit. Say we have certain evidence they are drowned. They mustn't be caught. I'm glad I've solved this case, but it must go no further."

"And what about you, sir?"

"If Lord Ealing becomes Home Secretary, Blaikie, I shall retire from the Yard. I've often considered it."

"Retire, sir?" said Blaikie, aghast.

"Private work is much more exciting, Blaikie, and one gets a much freer hand. I'm sick of the routine."

"But what a loss, sir. What will the Yard do without you?"

"If Ealing is at the Home Office, I shall be cleared out soon enough. I prefer to leave of my own accord."

Blaikie sighed. "And this is what comes of finding out too much," he said.

"Or of finding it out too late, Blaikie. It's my fault. I blame myself."

"I should never have found it out at all," said the Inspector, humbled.

"No, Blaikie, I don't think you would," said Wilson. He walked towards his car, cheerfully whistling a tune. Blaikie followed sorrowfully after his chief.

CHAPTER XXXV

IN WHICH THE AUTHOR WINDS UP HIS STORY, AND JOHN PASQUETT PROVIDES THE MORAL

It was a surprise both to Lord Ealing's friends and to the public when the personnel of the new Government was announced, and it was found that he had gone back to his old post at the Home Office. Higher office had been confidently predicted for him, and those who met him hardly knew whether to congratulate or to say nothing. But within two or three days the news leaked out, and was spread abroad by discreet paragraphs in the Press. Lord Ealing had been offered the Foreign Office, but his keen interest in prison reform had induced him to ask the Prime Minister personally to allow him to return to his first Cabinet post. Lord Ealing's interest in prison reform had not been obvious during his previous terms of office: indeed, no one had ever noticed it before. But newspaper readers are easily satisfied, and the explanation was generally accepted. Lord Ealing was much lauded for his public spirit and self-abnegation in accepting the less coveted office.

We, of course, are well aware of his lordship's reasons. Although the incriminating letter, which he cursed himself for a fool for having ever written, was safely destroyed, he had no desire that the public should hear any more of the Radlett case. If Cul-

pepper or Arthur Wharton should be brought to trial, the former might easily produce his copy of the letter; and, though he felt able to deal with such a situation by a complete denial of its authenticity, he knew that the incident would create suspicion. There were, moreover, other things that might come out if a trial occurred—for example, his attempt to hush up the doubts of Pasquett's identity, or even his part in the escape of the chief criminals. It was certainly best for Lord Ealing to hush matters up all he could, and there could be no better point of vantage for his purpose than the Home Secretaryship. For Scotland Yard is under the Home Office. Lord Ealing began to study prison reform for the first time: since he had taken the Home Office, he meant to carry it off with éclat.

Before his lordship had settled down in his new office, Norah Culpepper's motor-boat had been found, overturned and adrift, a good hundred miles from land. It was empty, and no bodies were recovered, but the newspapers generally took the view that the fugitives had perished, and Wilson himself, pursuing his plan of letting the whole case drop, lent the weight of his opinion to this view. Public interest in the case at once waned with the disappearance of the principal actors, and it dropped out of the newspapers. There were only short and inconspicuous references to such comparatively uninteresting events as the upsetting of the will which Pasquett and Culpepper had forged. Indeed, this was almost an automatic process, for all claims that had been put forward under the forged will were withdrawn, and Radlett's fortune was allowed to pass unchallenged, under his previous will, to the charitable purposes to which he had dedicated it on leaving

America. This involved no litigation, since the forged will had not yet been proved. Pasquett had indeed drawn money largely on Radlett's account, but this had been under the power of attorney, and the money still stood in Radlett's name. The representatives named in the earlier will came to London and assumed formal possession of Radlett's property. They decided to take no further proceedings in connection with the case, as, even if Culpepper could be caught, it was very doubtful whether his part in the affair could be brought home to him. The Home Secretary, consulted by the American beneficiaries under the old will, strongly advised them to let well alone. Before long, Mrs. Culpepper was able to report to her husband that he could safely show himself again in England.

Lord Ealing, of course, on assuming office under the Crown, had temporarily to resign his directorships. He was succeeded by Lord Broadway, his first cousin and a member of the late Government. He and Broadway had changed places in the same way before, to the profit of both. Broadway, with Lord Ealing's constant advice to help him, successfully steered the Anglo-Asiatic and the Anglo-Yenisei Corporation through the difficult time which followed the discovery of Pasquett's imposture. The New York charity's trustees were tactfully persuaded not to spoil the market by unloading the Radlett shares prematurely. Speeches by members of the Government maintained public confidence in the soundness of the concessions. A new issue of capital was publicly subscribed—it was, in fact, heavily oversubscribed on the first morning—to replace Radlett's money, which was being withdrawn. The Anglo-

Yenisei became an All-British affair, and was much boosted in the sacred name of Empire. Lord Ealing gave a quiet little dinner at Sugden's Hotel to celebrate the success of the new issue of capital. It was most select and expensive: Mr. Mounteagle talks of it still.

So successfully were these operations carried through that, so far from losing money by Pasquett's downfall, Lord Ealing netted a handsome sum to add to his existing fortune. He draws from his investments in the Anglo-Asiatic and the Anglo-Yenisei a princely income beside which his official salary is a mere bagatelle. Lord Ealing's associates also did well. Sir James Vanzetti, now by his lordship's influence raised to the peerage as Baron Pinner, has made pots of money out of the Anglo-Asiatic. He has quite forgiven Lord Ealing for any part he may have played in causing his earlier misfortunes. Sir Eli Benjamin, too, has moved from Clapham to Belgravia, and Lady Benjamin is busy laying siege to Society. In short, we regret to say that, at this latter end of our story, the wicked are undoubtedly flourishing like the green bay tree.

Not all the financial wangles or all the political speeches in the world, of course, would of themselves produce this uninterrupted flow of wealth and prosperity for every one concerned in the concessions, from Lord Ealing to the widows and orphans whose mite has been entrusted to his care. It is also the case that the Radlett concession, now transferred by the Soviet authorities to the Anglo-Yenisei Corporation, is a thoroughly sound thing. It has the advantage of being quite exceptionally well managed. A short while after

the events we have described, the Russian management of both Corporations was entrusted to a new manager, to whom their great success is largely due. The manager's name is John Pearson, a man, as Lord Broadway said at the annual meeting, of long and varied experience and with a first-rate knowledge of Siberian conditions. John Pearson, we believe, bears a close resemblance to a certain John Pasquett, with whom we are already familiar. Just before his appointment, he married a very charming wife, whose name is Norah. Mrs. Pearson, we are told, is remarkably like a certain Miss Culpepper, whose acquaintance we have also made. Their first child, a fine boy, now six months old, is named Arthur.

Mr. Culpepper has returned to England. He is one of the leading directors of both companies, and struts daily to the office in Kingsway more immaculately dressed than ever. He keeps his flat in Paris, but he has sold the villa at Paramé to the Rustons, and bought a large comfortable house in South Kensington. He had recently been made a J.P., and has thoughts of standing for Parliament in the Liberal interest.

Arthur also is back in England. He is, indeed, the only one of our actors who shows no sign of getting rich. He has left business, and gone back to Oxford, where he is now Fellow and Tutor of his old college. He is unmarried, and fears the approach of middle age. But, even if he is sometimes bored, he never thinks of going back to the Anglo-Asiatic. He has had enough of that. He means to spend the long vacation this year in Siberia, with some friends of his, called Jack and Norah Pearson.

Superintendent Wilson has left Scotland Yard, and started a private detective agency of his own. He is

doing—we absolutely refuse to tell you what he is doing.

. . . . . .

One thing more, and our record is complete. When Pasquett and Arthur Wharton met again—far from the scene of the adventures we have been describing, they had many a talk about the affair at Sugden's Hotel. Arthur wanted to understand his friend's motives for the imposture, and there was no reluctance on Pasquett's side to speak of what he had done.

"Why did I do it?" he said. "Is it ever easy to say why one does a thing? I suppose it was partly that I wanted Hugh's money, and felt I had a right to it, whatever the law might say. You see, it was only an accident that it was not mine by law. Why was I to respect property rights which would never have existed if Hugh had lived another couple of minutes? Upon my word, I don't see why. Morally, I feel that I acted quite within my rights. I was only doing what Hugh meant to do himself, though I admit I had to find some queer ways of doing it. Isn't that a good enough explanation for you?

"And yet, I admit, it's not the whole explanation. It would be just as true, Arthur—and just as untrue—if I said I did it for the fun of the thing. The law's an ass, my boy, and it seemed to me good fun to have a slap at the law, and carry off Radlett's money under its very nose. I didn't mind the danger—I rather liked it. I've been in plenty of tight places in my time, and enjoyed being there. And the idea, as I worked it out, was a jolly good idea. It very nearly came off—don't you forget that. If that chap Wilson —I liked him, by the way—hadn't had the nose of a

rat and the patience of Job, I should have got clean off with the goods. And even you will admit that, if it had come off, it would have been a good joke to keep one cheerfu. for the rest of one's life.

"But it didn't. I know. The sin found out the transgressor, and all that—though, when you come to think of it, the transgressors haven't done so badly for themselves, after all. There's old Culpepper, getting as rich as Crœsus—and Norah and I haven't much to complain about. I've had my fun, and I reckon I've not paid for it. Nobody's paid. That's the beauty of it. Your wicked uncle did things far worse than I ever thought of, and look at him. He's quite cheerful, isn't he? I reckon there's no moral to this story of ours. It wouldn't do for a Sunday School Tract. That's part of the joke.

"I speak, do I, as if I were actually glad I got found out? Well, I don't much mind. It would have been better fun to pull it off, but I'm not complaining. And, to this day, I can't see how I could have planned it better. Of course, there was one obvious weakness in the whole thing—the absence of a body. But I couldn't make that good unless I'd murdered somebody, and—murder's not in my line. I had to do the best I could without a body, and I tell you, Arthur, I still think I planned it jolly well. If I made a mistake, it was in not making more certain of my *alibi*. But it was only bad luck tripped me up there. If it hadn't been for the million to one chance of my meeting you on the aeroplane, no one would ever have suspected that I wasn't in Warsaw when it happened. And I did provide a quite plausible second *alibi* in case that fell through. I admit I wasn't careful enough there, but it was really bad luck that did me down.

"It was a very pretty murder, however you look at it, and all the prettier for being no murder at all. Hugh would have enjoyed it, if he'd been alive. Wilson enjoyed it, though it was his business to 'bring me to justice.' And I enjoyed it. So why worry? And, my dear Arthur, why maintain this air of disapproval? Why didn't you enjoy it too? It's your fault, not mine, if you didn't. But you stuck to me all the same. You don't mind having a scoundrel for a friend, do you, now?

"The trouble about you, Arthur, is that you've been badly brought up. You think you're a bit of an iconoclast; but away down in your mind you've a profound veneration for property, and law and order, and middle-class morality, and all the other things you criticise in those funny little books of yours. I had all that knocked out of me quite early. You see, I was brought up to be a business man—in America, too. I know that law and order and the rights of property, and all the rest of the stuff your uncle puts in his speeches, are just bunkum. You only know it theoretically; when it comes to acting you're a good old Whig like the rest—though it's ungrateful of me to say so, after you defied your poor conscience and helped me to get away. But that was because you're fond of me. It was against your principles. Now, wasn't it? It wouldn't have been against mine. I judge for myself: I make my own laws. That sounds as if I was making a virtue out of my vice, or posing as a superman—beyond good and evil, and all that. But I'm not, really. It's only that I'm not civilised, and you are. Upon my word, Arthur, I'd do it again." Jack Pasquett laughed in Arthur Wharton's puzzled face.